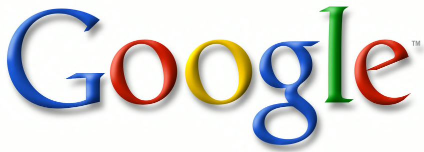


This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

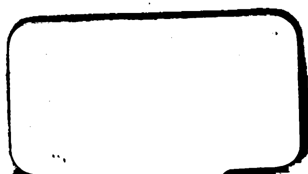
+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`




600069333U




600069333U

HECKINGTON.

A NOVEL.

BY

MRS. GORE.

Bewailing, in my chambere, all allone,
  Despeiring of all joye or remedye,
Foretiret of my thocht, and woe-begone!
  Unto the windowe gin I walk in bye;
  To see the world and folk that wend forbye;
As, for the tyme, though I of mirthis fude
May have no moe, to luke it dothe me gude.
KING JAMES I. (1825.)

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:
HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,
SUCCESSORS TO HENRY COLBURN,
13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.
1858.

The right of Translation is reserved.

249. v. 485.



J. Billing, Printer, 103, Hatton Garden, London, and Guildford, Surrey.

HECKINGTON.

CHAPTER I.

Be the path of life rough or smooth, Time falters not in his progress. The engines of steamers and express-trains may be reversed; but even in the heaviest of country-neighbourhoods, the pace of Time is unflagging.

Two years passed away, almost unnoticed by Miss Corbet, and reckoned by her father only by the crops of Italian rye-grass cut, in the interim, in the meadows of Northover, ere

Rawdon of Heckington again set foot on the soil.

But now, for a fortnight past, he had been expected. He had written home from Paris, stating that "he should be at home in the course of the month of May; in order that Mrs. Rawdon's confinement might take place at the Hall." Their first child, a son-and-heir, was born at Naples. He wished the second to be an Englishman. It was to be called "William;" his wife having prevailed upon him to christen the eldest "Everard" after her father, whose days were numbered, and to whom she seemed desirous of paying a last compliment.

But May came and went, and no signs of the Rawdons; and though Mr. Corbet grew a little fretful at their want of punctuality, it was no surprise to his daughter to read in the paper, towards the end of the month, an announcement among the births of "In Curzon Street, May Fair, the lady of Arthur

Rawdon, Esq., of Heckington Hall, of a daughter."

A girl!—After all, Miss Corbet could not regret that she was not to hear the name of "Willy" bandied about with careless familiarity in the Heckington establishment. On the whole, she was glad that their coming had been postponed till they could arrive safe and well, with their two little ones; Florence being probably subdued and softened by the recent perils of childbed.

She was beginning to look forward with delight to the aspect of Heckington brightened by habitation and cheerfulness. The place was looking lovely,—more so, indeed, than she had ever seen it. Though far from reconciled to the facing of Portland stone on which Mrs. Rawdon had insisted, which to Tiny's prejudiced eye appeared less in keeping with the old Jacobean structure than its former façade of discoloured brick and ivy, still, standing out against the bright verdure

and richly-foliaged trees of the park, the new white mansion looked airy and inviting.

Within, all was at present in a state of confusion. Except a single morning-room and the old tapestry-chambers kept sacred to be in readiness for the family, the apartments exhibited only their naked walls of white and gold, and naked oak flooring, till the bales, cases, and crates of new furniture standing in the vast hall, were submitted to the fiat of the lady of Heckington.

It was a great satisfaction to Miss Corbet that she had not been required to preside over the distribution of these treasures. Her interference would probably have been productive of a thousand blunders. Such things were out of her line, and foreign to her experience. Some came from Paris,—some from Italy and Sicily. Even the less recondite objects furnished by London upholsterers, were much too modern to enter into her notions of household furniture; whereas, when touched with

the wand of fashion by the Florence of Clevelands, they would subside into their destined places.

Sometimes, she felt a little uneasy at the audacity of Arthur's innovations. The expenses he had incurred appeared to *her* narrow experience of almost regal extent. But report asserted that Mr. Rawdon's revised rentroll exceeded seven thousand a-year; and that the much belied hands of the Court of Chancery had accumulated for him, during their seven years' stewardship, a sum more than sufficient to cover the expenses he had incurred. Little Everard was not likely to be ruined by the extravagance of his parents.

And had not even Tiny herself been guilty, during their absence, of acts of prodigality? With her father's sanction she had added to Northover a room for her especial use; which, though it bore the name of Studio, was rather a spacious museum. At first, Mr. Corbet remonstrated against the ex-

penditure of several hundred pounds on the property of another. But she was of age, and in possession of her fortune; nor could he deny that the money thus squandered was not only derived from the savings of a jointure furnished by Heckington, but about to be invested in a property in which she possessed an ulterior interest.

And now that all was complete, it would have been treason to object; so great was the happiness added to her life, and so charming the addition to Northover. Not that Tiny's Studio was open to visitors. But it enabled her to free the drawing-room from her easels and books; and afforded her an unassailable refuge from intrusion.

Lucretia Rawdon, doating upon her young cousin with almost more than a mother's tenderness, had insisted on endowing her with some portion of Mrs. Enmore's bequeathments; among others, with the fine library collected by her Creole husband.

"You are aware, my dear Tiny," wrote the eccentric spinster, "that I never open a book; and that if I did, I shouldn't understand it. And as you choose to bury yourself alive at Northover, you must be sadly in want of company when your father's away looking after his beasts and their oil-cake;—more especially now that Fridolin, poor beast, has barked his last.—So I've placed Reginald Enmore's quartos and folios in charge of Pickford's van. And to make the present more palatable, have packed up along with them that likeness by Richmond of Arthur Rawdon; and a pen-and-ink sketch which poor dear Willy sent from Dresden, and which I was startled to find locked up in poor Jane's bureau, as if all that dreary time she'd been loving her younger son in secret. So please to accept them, my dear, from a kinswoman who loves you. I would have forwarded by the same conveyance the glass jars of snakes, centipedes, and scorpions, of which poor Jane

was so proud. But I recollect how much you always disliked them. The moths have got to the stuffed birds, and the mites to the butterflies and insects (we none of us last for ever, Tiny!) So them, I don't propose."

Gratefully were the gifts accepted; and it was chiefly to afford them a fitting asylum the Studio was planned. In process of time, a marble bust, founded with the utmost success, by Mac Dowall, on the Dresden sketch and an able photograph, occupied a pedestal in one of the niches; and Miss Corbet's copy of the Heckington Gainsborough, originally destined for Fredville, faced the portrait of her cousin. The cheery, well-proportioned room contained, in short, all her family relics and records.

Happy and contented were the hours which its young mistress passed within its walls! Though she had but just completed her twenty-second year, Tiny had seen enough of the cares of life to know that a quiet home, surrounded by loving hearts, constitutes one

of its dearest blessings. The boys were growing up all she could desire. Alfred, now fifteen, exhibited unusual promise; and the consciousness that she had fulfilled and was still fulfilling her sacred promise to their mother, satisfied her conscience and her heart.

Among the orders executed for Mr. Rawdon of Heckington during his prolonged absence, was the erection of a monument, in the parish church, to the memory of his parents; and though his cousin could not but surmise that, had he been aware of the untoward circumstances connected with their married life, he would have been less disposed to perpetuate the memory of their union, she could not but admire the filial reverence which had prompted the act.

She was sitting one afternoon in a shady nook of the Northover flower-garden, adjacent to the spot where, under the drooping branches of a fine deodara, Fridolin was interred,—a

nook commanding the road leading from Heckington,—when she was startled by the sound of wheels and the sight of a carriage; a rare spectacle, just then,—for her more fashionable neighbours were lost to eyes profane amidst the smother and dust of a London season.

Unversed in the comings and goings of that Lilliputian world which, viewed through its own atmosphere, becomes Brobdignag, Miss Corbet had forgotten that the same auspicious weather which brings lilacs, laburnums, and horse-chesnuts into bloom, and nightingales into song, brings also the Whitsuntide recess; when the over-talked Houses of Parliament turn out to grass their over-loquacious Members.

The livery of her visitors was not that of the Rawdons. But she was not sufficiently versed in the armorial bearings of the new baronet whose parents were surmised by Mrs. Horsford to be an ink-bottle and hank

of red-tape, to recognise the carriage of Lady Frere.

Eagerly, however, when announced, did she welcome her. From *her*, she was sure of hearing of the Highams, and probably of the Rawdons.

From the moment of their instalment at Clevelands, she had found in the metamorphosed Emilia a pleasant and kindly neighbour; and not being one of those fastidious beings who expect to find angels in their fellow mortals, she thought herself fortunate in possessing within reach a companion of her own age, familiar with scenes and persons of whom it would have been worse than useless to talk to her father.

Sir Barton, who in private as in public life, followed, like a shadow, the footsteps of Lord Higham, had trained his young wife after the system of his great original. Children were wanting to perfect the domestic companionship into which the noble Secretary had softened

his Amy. But with less plastic materials to work upon, Sir Barton had created in *his* ladyship, a prize specimen of decorum. The demure Emilia was sobered into the model-wife of an official man:—early, punctual, methodical, cautious; versed in the statistics of "Who's who,"—and possessing an untirable memory for the Ayes and Noes of divisions, and dates of notices of motions.

Better than all, however, and far most difficult to accomplish, he had tutored her into the difficult art of holding her tongue; and though, like an elaborately pruned plant she had forfeited something of the charm of spontaneous development, yet, where nature has been sparing of her gifts, the interposition of art is often a blessing. Lady Frere was now a quiet ladylike woman, who did credit in London society to the name she bore, and thought herself amply repaid for her painstaking self-discipline, by her acceptance in circles far above the level of Branshaw Combe.

Such was the guest whom Sophia Corbet welcomed, not into her Studio, but into her cheerful drawing-room; rejoicing to be told how well Amy was looking, and that the youngest of her four children had just been vaccinated.

"Lady Higham is very angry with you, my dear Miss Corbet," said Lady Frere, "for not coming to town. She wants so much to show you her little boy!"

"As the Rawdons were expected at Heckington," replied Tiny, "I did not wish to be out of the way in case of their arrival. After so long an absence from England, Florence would perhaps feel a little *desorientée* alone in the country."

"Had she not been confined in town, I believe it was settled that Mr. and Mrs. Horsford should accompany her into Hertfordshire. But even when you *do* visit London, Lord and Lady Higham and their friends, (my husband included,) complain that you shut

yourself up in Hertford Street with old Miss Rawdon, and are not to be reached without a regular siege."

"My poor cousin is reserved and eccentric. It would not please her if I received many visitors, or left her much alone. By affording me a *pied-à-terre*, she has enabled me to take lessons in oil-painting, of which I was very desirous; and I do not like to thwart her."

"You are not very fond of thwarting any one, I suspect," said Lady Frere, kindly. "The more reason that you should not disappoint poor Amy! For the last two years, she has seen very little of her sisters;—Mrs. Rawdon being abroad, and Mrs. Turberville a fixture at the Abbey; and she really longs for your company. Even Mrs. Horsford is detained from her by her husband's lingering decline. The poor old man has never been able to leave the small house at Torquay, which Lord Higham took for them when we engaged Clevelands."

Good news for Sophia Corbet; who had dreaded not a little that fatal mother-in-law's Viziership at Heckington.

"The Rawdons will, I conclude, be here in a fortnight?" said she.—"They have selected a charming moment for returning to the country."

"Neither of them cares much about the country, I fancy," replied her visitor.

"But they care about home!"

"People so well off as they are, make a home wherever they go."

Poor Tiny's smile was not altogether assentient. According to *her* estimate of the world, homes were not so easily made. Especially such homes as Heckington.

"Had they been as fond of the country, as you or I," persisted Lady Frere, (though probably if her own wishes had been consulted, she never would have seen a greener tree than is produced by the Birdcage Walk, or London

yourself up in Hertford Street with old Miss Rawdon, and are not to be reached without a regular siege."

"My poor cousin is reserved and eccentric. It would not please her if I received many visitors, or left her much alone. By affording me a *pied-à-terre*, she has enabled me to take lessons in oil-painting, of which I was very desirous; and I do not like to thwart her."

"You are not very fond of thwarting any one, I suspect," said Lady Frere, kindly. "The more reason that you should not disappoint poor Amy! For the last two years, she has seen very little of her sisters;—Mrs. Rawdon being abroad, and Mrs. Turberville a fixture at the Abbey; and she really longs for your company. Even Mrs. Horsford is detained from her by her husband's lingering decline. The poor old man has never been able to leave the small house at Torquay, which Lord Higham took for them when we engaged Clevelands."

Good news for Sophia Corbet; who had dreaded not a little that fatal mother-in-law's Viziership at Heckington.

"The Rawdons will, I conclude, be here in a fortnight?" said she.—"They have selected a charming moment for returning to the country."

"Neither of them cares much about the country, I fancy," replied her visitor.

"But they care about home!"

"People so well off as they are, make a home wherever they go."

Poor Tiny's smile was not altogether assentient. According to *her* estimate of the world, homes were not so easily made. Especially such homes as Heckington.

"Had they been as fond of the country, as you or I," persisted Lady Frere, (though probably if her own wishes had been consulted, she never would have seen a greener tree than is produced by the Birdcage Walk, or London

Squares), "they would not have loitered so long in Italy."

"Every one seems to loiter in Italy, who has a taste for fine scenery and sunshine," observed Miss Corbet, apologetically.

"They spent more than half a year in Rome," added her visitor; "and Mr. Rawdon really looks and talks like an artist. His wife wants him to cut off his beard, now that he has returned to live among civilised Christians. It certainly gives him something of a scampish air.—As I said before, quite like an artist."

Again, the smile of Tiny was dissentient. She only hoped the offending beard might not disappear before they met; completing as it probably must, the strong resemblance borne by Arthur to his brother.

"Mr. Rawdon talked about coming down here with *us*, for a few days, at Whitsuntide. But his wife has been so seriously ill since her confinement, that it would not have been right

for him to leave her. And the sacrifice was not needed, as they will be here so soon, together."

"Certainly not till the end of the season. Parliament will scarcely be up till August, and they have their house in Curzon Street till then."

"But my cousin is not in parliament?"

"There is always a great deal going on in town so long as the Houses are sitting; and Florence, poor thing, has seen nothing of London gaieties since she married."

"And does she still care for them?—And has Arthur *learned* to care for them?—He used to dislike going out!"

"He is not fond of full-dress balls and parties; but he likes clubs, and *la vie d'artiste.*"

Again was Tiny reminded of poor Willy.

"There is, in short, strong evidence, in similarity of tastes, of the cousinship between you," said Lady Frere with an affable smile.

"Because I am fond of Clubs, and wear a beard?" rejoined Tiny a little amused.

"Because you are so devoted to the Fine Arts. On Mr. Marsham's return from Rome, at the meeting of parliament, when I naturally inquired after the Rawdons, he told me he had seen little or nothing of your cousin; who had hired a *studio* the other side of the Tiber, a mile from his own residence, where he lived entirely among painters, and sculptors, and those kind of people."

"A new taste on the part of Arthur. His letters to us, during his absence, have been chiefly on business topics; commissions concerning Heckington, rather than an account of his own occupations. But he spoke in raptures of the beauty of his little boy."

"And with justice;—there never was a lovelier little fellow! Just his mother's delicate features and transparent complexion. Mrs. Rawdon has returned to England prettier than ever."

"I sometimes hear at Shrublands second-hand news of the Horsford family; and Mrs.

Hartland told me, some time ago, that the enthusiasm excited in Italy by Mrs. Rawdon's beauty, was even exceeded by her *succès* in Paris. By her mother's account, she must have been a leading personage in Rome;—her bosom friends all Princesses, and her parties crowded with Cardinals and foreign Royalty."

"They saw a great deal of world, of all nations. English people who give dinner-parties are sure to get on. Even Mrs. Ommany of Fair Oak, (no great favourite of yours, I remember)," added Lady Frere, with a significant glance, "gave a ball at the *mi-carême*, last year at Naples, the list of company at which, read like the Almanach de Saxe Gotha."

"Why not a favourite of mine?" inquired Tiny. "And who could do otherwise than like a woman so honestly fond and proud of her children?"

"We know, at least, that you did not choose to become her daughter-in-law; for which I ought to thank you, since my sister

Augusta is to be Mrs. Victor Ommany. A great happiness to my mother, my dear Miss Corbet, to have her settled so near Branshaw Combe, as Fair Oak!"

"Then I sincerely wish you joy," was Tiny's cordial reply; "for I hear from every one that Victor Ommany has softened down into a very gentlemanlike young man."

"The tone of slang which Sir Barton Frere and myself found so offensive, soon wore off on the continent. People should never judge hastily of young people.—Most of us improve by living in the world."

"In manners, certainly."

"Why even Mrs. Rawdon—you will be greatly struck by her altered air and deportment. She is now so quiet,—so conciliating, —so graceful;—and, above all, so exquisitely dressed. Her situation has hitherto prevented her entering into general society. But she used to dine with the Highams; and I persuaded her to accompany me to one of Lady

Wilmersfield's Saturday nights, where she made quite a sensation."

"I never thought her so pretty as Amy," was Tiny's candid confession.

"Her countenance used to be less pleasing, —probably because she was always uneasy at holding such a false position. But poor dear Lady Higham has so little manner,—so little conversation—"

"She is less worldly than her sister;—less eager to shine"—

"And then, she so thoroughly neglects herself. She has become a perfect dowdy. I sometimes doubt whether, before she comes out, she even looks in the glass!"

"I daresay Lord Higham finds no fault."

"His *sister* does. She was complaining to me, the other day, that poor Amy literally did nothing by way of representing her husband's family, or upholding his party.—*One* dull assembly in the course of the season! And now that Lady Brookdale's daughter is coming out,

she would not be sorry to find her sister-in-law assume her proper place in society."

"Lady Brookdale thinks so much about people's 'place in society!'"

"And does not every one?"—inquired Lady Frere, with undissembled surprise.

"Every one, I suppose, who has nothing better to care about."

"But what do you consider *better?*" persisted the new ladyship, as if asking for information.

"If I were Lady Higham, I should probably answer, 'my husband and children.' Being only poor Sophy Corbet, a farmer's daughter, I reply, 'my pigeons, my guinea-fowls, my double jessamine and new passiflora.'"

"Yes,—I remember that Lady Brookdale included *you* in her strictures," replied Lady Frere, good-humouredly.—"She has withdrawn the light of her countenance from her old friend, Mrs. Turberville, for keeping her pretty daughter-in-law in the country; and

entertains a poor opinion of the unaspiring Miss Corbet, who will not be presented. And I assure you it is not every young lady who would have disdained the chaperonage she offered."

"Lady Brookdale was very kind. But she must be sadly in want of occupation, to trouble herself so much with the affairs of her acquaintance."

"Ingeniously guessed; *too* ingeniously guessed!—I shall begin to be afraid of you," said Lady Frere, laughing—"The truth is, that Victoria Barwell is too completely in the hands of Miss Strickney to afford her mother the usual maternal interest; and Lord Brookdale being only an Irish peer, without material interest in public life, the moment his Waiting is over, he subsides into a non-entity. It would therefore be a great thing for his wife to have an heiress to chaperon, or a sister-in-law with an opera-box. But all this time, I am forgetting the grand purport of my visit; an

omission Sir Barton would never forgive," she exclaimed, starting up for departure. "Which day, of our Whitsun-week's holidays, will you and Mr. Corbet give us the pleasure of your company at dinner at Clevelands?"—

CHAPTER II.

Even thus prepared for further delay in the arrival of the Rawdons, Tiny could not repress her expectations, when every morning on opening her eyes she saw how bright was the weather, that, before night, Arthur would manage to run down by the train, and enjoy at least a glimpse of his beautiful Heckington.

But again and again, she was disappointed. No Arthur made his appearance; and the weather, apparently resentful of his neglects,

at length changed to chilly, rainy, cloudy,—everything that was unsettled and disagreeable; till at last, under auspices so unpropitious, she ceased to wish for his arrival.

But when eventually, in a harsh north wind, the long-looked-for condescended to visit Hertfordshire, she found him nearly as ungenial as the atmosphere.—Impossible to be more changed. The accusation against him contained in his brother's death-bed letter, of being "arrogant, cold-hearted, and graceless," seemed almost justified. She saw at once that she had lost her friend.

Whether the alteration were attributable to absence, to extended experience of the world, or to the ascendancy of the Horsfords, his brief visit did not enable her to determine. That he was cold, abrupt, and reserved, was grievously apparent; but whether from superficial change or perversion of character, time must prove.

Already wounded in her feelings, she even

imagined there was something peremptory and ungracious in his mode of alluding to all they had done for Heckington. He seemed to consider it their *duty*,—their *business;* as if Henry Corbet had been "placed there" to look after his interests.—He evidently thought, or had been taught to think, that the chief object in life of his cousin Sophia was to repay the obligations she owed the family. Placidia appeared to have glided out of his memory.

The new position in which it was his pleasure to place her, was all the more unacceptable, because his likeness to his brother had never been half so apparent. The stain of a foreign sun upon his cheek, and the picturesqueness of his flowing beard, perfected the resemblance. A trifling gesture with which, in speaking, he occasionally put back his moustache, so painfully reminded her of poor Willy, that tears would fain come into her eyes. But she would have been sorry to shed them before that careless tra-

velled gentleman.!—Open her heart to *him?* —She did not even open her Studio!—He was not worthy to share the worship of her family-treasures.

It was not till she alluded to his children, that his heart expanded. In talking of the beauty of little Everard, his face brightened, and his voice assumed a tone of interest.

"Yes—the most beautiful little fellow in the world!" he said, in answer to her praise. "But how did *you* hear anything about him?—True, true—you have lately seen that model female official which Sir Barton Frere has cut out of card-paper on the pattern of Lady Higham; who thinks it her duty to say ditto to every syllable uttered by Amy."

"Her admiration of your little boy seemed quite spontaneous."

"In that *clique*, nothing is spontaneous. Never was there anything more nauseously *routinier* than the whole set.—I found them revolving like squirrels in their cages, just

where I left them; the same catchwords on their lips, of 'motions and amendments,'—'majorities and minorities;'—throwing stones in each other's faces in public life, and bonbons in private;—heaping their tables with Blue Books in evidence of Statesmanship, just as my poor mother used to cover hers, in proof of Piety, with volumes stamped by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel!"

Tiny felt vexed at this disparaging allusion to his mother. He seemed thoroughly to have abstracted himself from the family.

"You will find both Lord Higham and Sir Barton highly thought of in public life,"—said she, a little stiffly.

"*Public life!*"—he retorted, shrugging his shoulders. But whether in scorn of that select department of human nature, or of her own limited insight into its opinions, it was not easy to determine.

"All sham,—all moonshine!" he peevishly added. "A chorus of ignoble voices, which,

united, get up a tolerable roar; but every one of which, singly, is as weak and thready as a reed."

To what motive to ascribe this vehement outburst against the impalpable shadow of the mysterious substance we have agreed to call Government, Miss Corbet was puzzled. It seemed as vague and vapoury a diatribe as the defiance of Ajax to the Elements. Perhaps as Robert Horsford now figured as private secretary to some public man who was much too prudent not to write his own letters, *he* might be the rat behind the arras at which Mr. Rawdon was fencing.

Her father now made his appearance, after a trudge round his corn-fields, with news of the coming harvest, and weather-wisdom which might have put the Greenwich Observatory to the blush; and Downing Street and Parliament were thrown into the shade. The practicality of Henry Corbet seldom glanced an inch beyond his own narrow

horizon; and all he saw was consequently seen clearly. His discourse with his artist-nephew was of composts, drains, levels, and rye-grass — the only Italian production he cared to ask about; and though Arthur at first regarded him as an A 1 bore, by the time he had refreshed his inner man with a wholesome country luncheon, he became more interested in Northover, and was as much the better for his visit as one of Henry Corbet's Alderney calves for its first day's grass.

"How deplorably that young fellow is gone off!" said Mr. Corbet to his daughter, as soon as he had taken his leave. "Scarcely the vestige of a gentleman in his appearance,—and so snarling and supercilious in his demeanour!—Never saw any one more changed for the worse."

"His foreign manners and appearance will wear down when he has been a little longer in England," pleaded Tiny.

"The sooner the better. My poor wife and

I, Tiny, used to be sadly afraid you'd take a fancy to one of those Enmores, and be a miserable woman. Heaven's mercy be thanked, you never did. Marriages between cousins, though not prohibited by Scripture-warrant, are, to *my* notion, unnatural things."

Needless for his daughter to cite to him the opinion of Montaigne that such marriages are interdicted only because, according to St. Thomas, conjugal love, superadded to kindred love, would produce inordinate affection; which she sometimes fancied might have been the case had she become the wife of Willy Enmore. She replied only that she had never expected to find Arthur *improved* by connecting himself with the Horsfords.

"He don't seem to care a straw about Heckington!—" said the crestfallen farmer, who had expected the improvements effected by his zeal to call down thunders of applause.— "All the more extraordinary, now that he has a son to inherit the estate."

"Men of his age are so apt to take up the crotchet of the day! Scotland is just now the fashion; and Arthur appears to be wild after moors and deer-forests."

"He has engaged one, he tells me, with Charles Turberville, who is already off to the North for salmon-fishing. The old folks at the Abbey are satisfied, so they can but keep him from London and Paris. I can understand Charles Turberville wanting to get away from his mother's apron-string. But why Arthur, independent as he is, cannot settle at once under his own roof-tree, is amazing!"

"And scarcely less so, that we cannot allow him to follow the bent of his inclinations," rejoined his daughter, cheerfully. "So long as his new-fangled habits do not lead him to interfere with *us*, dear papa, let us leave the poor fellow to himself."

The philosophy of Placidia sustained her even under the severe gnat-biting of a visit from little Mrs. Hartland, who had of course

"heard from poor dear Mrs. Horsford that much as *some* members of the family thought of Heckington, Mr. Rawdon had no idea of settling there at present. He had taken the prevailing epidemic — a craze for Highland sports; and Florence, before she had half recovered her strength, was to be dragged to the North, poor darling,—perhaps to be crippled for life by riding Highland ponies and fording Highland rivers.—There was only one comfort;—and in poor Mr. Horsford's precarious state, comfort was needful. During their absence, the children and nurses were to be left at Heckington, to be within reach of that excellent Dr. Ashe; and she *did* pray and implore her dear Mrs. Hartland to make them her especial charge. Even the treasure of a head-nurse and the French bonne of whom poor Flo. was so fond, could scarcely be trusted at the distance of four or five hundred miles from their employers."

This was something of a trial. If the grand-

motherly programme should be countersigned by the Rawdons, to find the dear little Everard she had been so eager to fold in her arms, made over to the guardianship of a comparative stranger, would be a cruel probation.

That evening, she found, or fancied, her favourite piano considerably out of tune.

Before Midsummer had brought the roses into bloom and wreathed the quaint frontage of Northover with tassels of the favourite yellow honeysuckle she had transplanted from Grenfield House, and the white blossoms ot the Macartney rose, which the improvements of Heckington had exiled from its old home, she had means of judging for herself of the Rawdon *ménage*.

Little Edgar, though his Grenfield education ought to have rendered him a more accomplished bird's-nester, had inaugurated his holidays by a fall from one of the old elm-trees; and as the injury to his knee, which Dr. Ashe at first pronounced to be slight,

began to threaten permanent stiffness, his sister obtained Mr. Corbet's permission to take him to Hertford Street for a few days, for the benefit of further advice.

So overjoyed was poor Lucretia to have her idolised Tiny under her roof again, that she expressed an almost savage thankfulness for any event, even an accident, which brought her to town.

The old house was utterly and painfully unchanged. Lucretia made it a religion not to remove so much as a jar from its place, or a weather-stain from the paper. Except that every thing looked more dusty and faded than of old, and that the absence of its two sulky janitors, Harding and Parkins, imparted a sense of freedom to its inmates, all was, to a hair's-breadth and a shade, as in those happier days when, dull as it appeared to other people, to her it was Elysium.

The only thing Tiny found unaltered in which she could have desired a change, was the rough

questioning of the eccentric spinster. Joan Blunt was as much as ever Joan Blunt; and went straight to the point of even the most delicate question. "Pray, what have Heckington and the Rawdons done to Rawdon of Heckington, my dear Tiny?" said she, after Miss Corbet's anxieties on the boy's account had been appeased by the favourable decree of Brodie and Hawkins. "I find he is to spend the autumn in the Highlands: and not once since his return to England, has he condescended to set foot in my house!"

"For him, it must be replete with such painful associations—"

"Nonsense, my dear!" interrupted Lucretia. "It is full of painful associations for all of us. The *world* is full of them. Arthur Rawdon's not the first man who has survived his relations; though I admit that few ever behaved worse to them, while alive. Why, if people couldn't bear to enter the house where their family lived before them, half the grand man-

sions in the kingdom would be deserted.—No!—I'll tell you what it is. It is *finery!* It is Horsfordism quartered upon Heckingtonism. I always thought those upstarts would overlay him with their vulgar affectations. They have taught him to consider *me* a quizzical old snob,—and I don't resent their verdict.—But to shirk relationship, my dear Tiny, don't suffice to extinguish it."

"Arthur appears to see very little of any one, just now," said Miss Corbet, deprecatingly. "I hear from Lady Frere, that Mrs. Rawdon has been in considerable danger—"

"Only the danger that attends all lying-in women. But the Horsfords never take things like other people. They must always be pigs with six legs, instead of four."

"I am most anxious to see little Everard—" Tiny was beginning.

"Everard? — Who's *Everard?* — *What's* Everard?—Old Horsford's name, I fancy—"

"After whom, Mrs. Rawdon has named her son."

"Why not after its own father?—Look at the family-tree, my dear, in the Heckington library. You'll find there every decent English name. But no Everard!—Everard's Horsford all over."

"The child who bears the name is said to be a little cherub," pleaded Miss Corbet.

"Horsford again!—*We* never were cherubs. The Rawdons are not a good-looking race, and I don't know that the admixture of Creole blood mended the Enmores. But it don't much signify. Lucifer was the most beautiful of the angels."

Without stimulating further wrath on the part of her cousin by the announcement of her project, Miss Corbet proceeded, that very afternoon, to put her doubts to the proof by a visit to Florence. The manner in which she was received would satisfy her as to the footing on which they were hereafter to stand.

It was easy to reach Curzon Street; less easy to obtain admittance. The brougham hired by Miss Corbet for her sojourn in town, was so many degrees below the trimness and brightness of the equipages to which Mrs. Rawdon's servants were accustomed, that a careless "not at home" was the answer given to her simple-faced country-servant. But she was not to be so readily defeated. She was already on the doorstep.

"Should Mr. Rawdon be at home," said she, "pray tell him that Miss Corbet is here; very desirous of seeing the children before she leaves town."

The sweet ladylike self-possession of Placidia imposed upon the supercilious butler. For he instantly requested her to follow him; and having shown her into the drawing-room, proceeded a story higher,—leaving the door open, apparently while he hastened to convey her message.

A minute or two, afterwards, the steps of

two persons were heard hurrying down; and Tiny, believing them to be those of Arthur and his servant, advanced to meet him.

What was her surprise, to confront upon the landing, — evidently about to pass the door,—Robert Horsford and Mr. Marsham!—Unable to avoid the meeting, they accosted her with easy courtesy.

"It was so long since they had met!—They were *delighted* to see her again, and looking so charmingly!"

"Will you not go upstairs?" added Bob, —after cordially shaking her hand. "Florence is in her dressing-room, expecting you."

Still startled, and a little confused, she complied; and on reaching the second landing, a jaunty-looking French maid was awaiting her; holding open the door of what would have passed in Tiny's inexperienced eyes for a charming little drawing-room, had not a frilled and furbelowed toilet-table, and a gilt toilet-glass whose lace-curtains were fastened

on the stairs. "To say the truth, their unexpected visit has a little fatigued me."

"Shall I defer mine, then, till another day?" cousiderately inquired Miss Corbet.

"Not on any account. Not for worlds.—Take that little footstool, Tiny, and sit here beside me;—close to the sofa, that I may not have to speak loud.—I have long been wanting to talk to you."

In an instant, Miss Corbet had obeyed orders; beginning to be as much pleased by the frank kindness of Mrs. Rawdon, as she had been previously captivated by her loveliness.

"If I could have found strength to hold a pen," resumed Florence, "I should have written what I am going to ask,—that you will do us the great favour to share with dear Amy the sponsorship of our little daughter. Mamma was Everard's godmother; and you and Lady Higham come next in our regard."

"But will not Caroline be a little jealous?" inquired Miss Corbet.

"Charles Turberville is to be godfather; and it is uncustomary for husband and wife to officiate together. Besides, I have set my heart on there being another Sophia Rawdon of Heckington."

To refuse, under such circumstances, would have been impossible; though, for a thousand reasons, compliance was unsatisfactory.

"I begged Arthur to apply to you, soon after the young lady saw the light," added Mrs. Rawdon. "But he has grown so dreadfully indolent,—(the usual result, I fancy, of a sojourn in Italy,—and even *I*, born idle, am grown ten times idler than ever!)—that there is no getting him to write a note or leave a card for me. However, since you kindly comply with our request, 'all's well that ends well.'"

"And when is the ceremony to take place?"

"As soon as I can leave this quiet sofa and

snug dressing-room, and say twenty words without feeling faint," replied Mrs. Rawdon, who had now uttered twenty times twenty without exhibiting any tendency of the kind. "For it will be a fatiguing day, dear Tiny. Amy's boy is to be christened at the same time; and Lord Higham, *qui maintient les bons vieux principes,* insists, as Sir Charles Grandison would do, on a grand christening dinner to all who have taken part in the solemnity. So get up your steam and your white satin, my dear, and help us to maintain the dignity of the family."

This was a somewhat different view of her claims to that hinted, under Mrs. Horsford's instructions, by the little lady of Shrublands; and Miss Corbet was deeply gratified.

"But may I not have a sight of my god-daughter?" said she. "And Everard.—I am so longing to see your boy!—"

"Do you think me so much my own mistress as to command my own nursery?" re-

plied Mrs. Rawdon laughing. "My dear child, you have many delusions of spinster-life to unlearn!—However, I got rid, yesterday, of *one* of my janitresses; and if you touch yonder hand-bell *very* gently, and beg *very* hard to the consequential lady who will respond, perhaps she will allow us a glimpse of half a child.—Which will you have?"

"I am inclined to answer, like the Bishop in the story, 'Baith.' But since there *must* be a choice, let it be the boy."

"Ah! Tiny, Tiny!—Little Rawdon of Heckington carries the day with *you*, as with his father!—"

As the head-nurse at that moment sailed grandly in, looking like Semiramis in dimity, Miss Corbet was spared the embarrassment of a reply.

"This lady—one of baby's godmothers, Mrs. Milsum, wishes to see the children," said Mrs. Rawdon, instead of listening to suggestions that it was "high time she should

take a cup of arrow-root or glass of jelly, unless she wished to be worn to pieces." And the word god-mother, suggesting visions of christening-presents and many future tips of sovereigns, produced immediate compliance.

The poor little babe was brought in, soft, helpless, unconscious,—its flowing laces and muslins rendering it quite as much a supplement to Mamma, as any affinity of flesh and blood. A quiet kiss was imprinted on its forehead by Miss Corbet, with a degree of interest arising from the relative position they were hereafter to hold.

While she was still stooping over the little callow nestling, a wrangle was heard at the door; accompanied by a roaring cry and a variety of admonitory interjections.

"*Mais voyons donc, Monsieur Evrard! Voyons donc! — Soyons sage!*" — evidently proceeding from a difference of opinion between the Heir of Heckington and his *bonne.*

—Not yet two years old, and a will of his own!—The Creole blood was already unquestionably manifesting itself in "Monsieur Evrard!"—

The struggling child was at length brought in, dealing on the shoulders of Adrienne such punishment as his round soft fists clenched into swansdown balls, could manage to inflict; while his mother, putting her own delicate hands to her ears to shut out his noise, laughed heartily as she pointed out to Tiny the pugnacious spirit of her new cousin.

Miss Corbet, however, was more shocked than amused. Much as she had heard of the boy's beauty, it far surpassed her expectation; and she wanted to take him in her arms, and kiss those round fair cheeks on which the tears were glittering, like, if so hackneyed a simile can be borne with, dew-drops on a peach. But even for this, she did not choose to risk being kicked or scratched.

"*C'est qu'il a entendu la voix de Monsieur,*

et veut absolument voir son Papa," explained the *bonne*.

On which, Mrs. Milsum, the nurse, proceeded to add that the young rebel had seen through the bars of the nursery-window Mr. Rawdon ride up to the door, and insisted on being taken down to him.

It further appeared that "Master," on finding a brougham at the door, and hearing there was "company" with the invalid, had ridden away again; affording every chance that Master Everard's exasperation might be indefinitely prolonged.

"Won't you kiss me, Sir, and be a good boy?" inquired Tiny, on finding the case thus desperate. But his reply was a decidedly negative shake of the head, and an onslaught on her bonnet. As the child fixed her, however, with the glare of a tiger's whelp, something in what his uncle Willy used to call "the honest blue eyes of poor Tiny" acted like a charm on his nature. His roar was

suspended.—His little claws relaxed; and a half-smile dawned upon his beautiful face as he stretched out his arms to be taken into those of Miss Corbet.

"I knew we should be friends," said she, as a voluntary kiss ratified the treaty of peace.

Both baby and *bonne* were now dismissed; and in a few minutes, the little fellow was prattling in his broken words,—half French, half English,—which Florence declared to be a *lingua Franca* interpretable only by his father.

"It would amuse you, dear Tiny," said she, "to see Arthur's manly length stretched on the ground, and his solemn face made a plaything of by that urchin, crawling over him. Impossible to say which of the two is the greater child!"

"It would do more than amuse—it would gratify me beyond measure," replied Miss Corbet, on whom the tamed tigerling was now lavishing his endearments.

"I think I shall call you the Whisperer," added Florence, after watching their good understanding. "You cannot have a better object on which to exercise your art, than Evvy, —as perfect an Enmore as a parent's heart could (*not*) wish!"

Poor Tiny's first attempts at his education were not, however, so successful as they might have been: her endeavours to add the word "cousin" to the *lingua franca* of young Rawdon of Heckington, resulting only in "Tuddy;" a pet name immediately taken up and adopted by his mother.

CHAPTER III.

On quitting Curzon Street to proceed to Lady Higham's, the mind of poor Tiny seemed confused by a whirl of wonder.

She seemed to have "eaten of the insane root that takes the reason prisoner."— To fancy her rough, plain-spoken cousin Arthur the citizen of such a Capua, the inmate of such a house, the husband of such a Florence, was next to impossible.

Hitherto she had seen little of the wasteful

wantonness of wealth. Higham Grange was remarkable only for its solid simplicity; and the tawdry elegance of Clevelands was considerably tarnished before she attained years of observation.

Mrs. Rawdon's coquettish dressing-room consequently afforded her first introduction to the fopperies of Parisian luxury; and the velvet-pile carpet, white, studded with roses, — the silken draperies covered with embroidered muslin,—the medallions of Rose-du-Barry porcelain encrusting the furniture,—and a thousand costly trifles scattered about, astonished rather than pleased her.

"Don't fancy that I found these treasures in a ready-furnished house, Tiny," said Florence, noticing her surprise. "All you see here is my own, and came from my boudoir in the Champs Elysées. When I look round, I almost fancy myself there again; and forget for a time the horrid climate and horrid barbarisms of London."

But if thus fastidious, how will she ever reconcile herself to the "horrible climate and barbarisms" of the Highlands? naturally suggested itself to Miss Corbet, who, after spending an hour in that *bonbonnière*, oppressed by the luscious perfume of gardenias and heliotropes, no longer wondered at the scornful eye with which Arthur had surveyed her homely drawing-room and flower-garden.

In Park Lane, her better reason became itself again. In that house, all was as of old, except the names of its master and mistress. Her welcome was warm as ever; and Lady Higham, surrounded by her four well-conditioned children, appeared to be the happiest of women.

"How glad I am to see you amongst us again, Tiny," said she, after a hearty embrace; "you, if anybody can, will succeed in reconciling the Rawdons to England. I sadly fear we shall be having them start off again to the Continent."

"If we could only get them to Heckington for a week, it would plead its own cause far more eloquently than I could," she replied. "But Florence appears sadly enthralled by the pleasures of foreign life."

"Mistaken for once, dear Tiny. Florence is wild for a house in town, and would be overjoyed to settle at Heckington. It is Arthur who will hear of neither. Arthur is so altered,—so strange,—so morose.—It makes me miserable to think of him."

At that moment, there passed before the eyes of Sophia Corbet the vision of an afflicting deathbed; and the prediction of her poor stepmother, that the wife of either of Reginald Enmore's sons would have a terrible destiny, seemed again whispered in her ears.

"Arthur possesses all this world can afford to make life enjoyable," added Amy, after vainly waiting for a rejoinder. "But he seems to take no pleasure in anything.—Did

you ever see a lovelier child than little Everard?"

"I hope to see many more docile," replied Miss Corbet, — "among others, a certain Honourable James Armstead——"

"Who does not number as many weeks, as Rawdon of Heckington, months," rejoined Lady Higham.—And, as if to avoid further discussion of the nursery legislation of her sister, she began to talk of the approaching ceremony in which "Tuddy" was to take so prominent a part.

"Lord and Lady Brookdale are to be sponsors for little James," said she; "and Victoria Barnwell is to be introduced on this occasion. Her mother has therefore made it a great point with us to get up a brilliant party for her. You, my dear little bridesmaid, ought to be with one of us at this family gathering."

Cheered by the influence of so much kindness, and becoming gradually Londonised, Miss Corbet began to look forward with plea-

sure to the engagement; more particularly as Lady Higham who, since her happy marriage, had become far more catholic in her views than was compatible with the contracted circle of Clevelands, empowered her to extend the invitation to her cousin Lucretia. Not that Tiny was desirous to have the old lady appear where she would be so thoroughly out of place. But she knew that what a late American minister's wife used to call "the power of declension," would be highly gratifying to her feelings.

Still more gratifying, however, was it to Lucretia Rawdon that, the christening being fixed for the following week, she was thus assured of the prolongation of Tiny's visit; as the rapid amendment of little Edgar, under improved management, would otherwise have carried her back to her flower-beds and guinea-chicks. It was a delight to the fussy spinster to have so beautiful a specimen of the Rawdon race, and so kindly a specimen of human nature,

under her roof, bringing sunshine into the old house and warmth into her old heart; and while Tiny enjoyed herself with her friends in Park Lane, *she* desired no better than to escort the infirm Etonian to panoramas and dioramas, or listen with childish glee as genuine as his own, to the clever monologues of Priscilla Horton and Albert Smith.

No sooner did the news transpire of Miss Corbet's installation in town, in that F. O. circle of which George Marsham was the Buckingham and Bob Horsford the Rochester, than the Freres insisted on being dined with. Nor was Tiny so superior to the frailties of her sex as to be without curiosity concerning the home and mode of life which, at a period when every offer was disinterested, had been tendered to her acceptance.

The party invited to meet her would have been more acceptable, perhaps, had the said Rochester and Buckingham been omitted.—But Lady Frere indulged in the amiable delu-

sion that Miss Corbet would prefer familiar faces to those of strangers; a supposition not always valid, as regards old friends,—seldom as regards old acquaintance;—to break new ground in the human desert, presenting an alternative far more exciting.

But the five other guests invited to complete the ten methodically assigned by Sir Barton to his well-studied round table, were more elaborately selected:—the "Progress" Lord Ackerdoyle, aspiring to the renown of philosophical statesmanship, with the beautiful wife who sweetened his bitter green tea;—the clever dowager, Lady Wrexham, who had seen, heard, and read every thing worth seeing, hearing, and reading, for the last forty years, yet contrived to enliven the ears of other people with original matter;—Victor Ommany, over whose social education his future brother-in-law was prudently presiding; and a tall thin individual who, when his back was turned, every body called "Sir Index," but

who was formally presented to Miss Corbet by the name of "Sir Justin Roche."

The house of the new under-secretary was of moderate size, but so judiciously arranged as to double its actual dimensions. Every chair was placed where it was pleasantest to sit in, every book where it came easiest to hand, every *portière* hung where it excluded a draught, and every curtain where it accommodated itself best to the light.

The dinner was served *à la Russe;* the attendants being so well disciplined, and the whole service so carefully rehearsed, that had a spoon or glass been heard to jingle, or a guest been seen waiting for a sauce, an immediate change of administration would have been the result.

For the Red-tapist carried out in domestic life the system of routine which had, by slow progression, converted his own non-entityism, into substantiality. Every thing inh is establishment moved in a groove. From Lady Frere

down to the under-footman and the cruet-stand, all was regulated by clock-work.

As an old acquaintance of Miss Corbet, the Pamphleeter attached himself to her side, while the party was assembling before dinner; and, as if expresssly to remind her of former times, was careful to sprinkle his vitriolic dew over every new-comer.

"You don't know Sir Index, I fancy?" said he, in a low aside. "Sir Index is new since your time,—and a very successful novelty!—Some people get on in life by making one speech, like that impostor Single-Speech Hamilton.—Others, by writing one book, like that impostor,—no matter whom. Others, a pamphlet, like that other impostor, George Marsham, Esquire. But Sir Index Roche gets on by having interleaved Dod's Peerage, Baronetage, and Knightage with original notes; recording every-body-worth-knowing's cousinships and *liaisons;* so that when a colonial bishop is promoted, or a Sir Bar-

ton Frere pitchforked into the Privy Council, he has only to turn to his pet volume, in order to class him as accurately as Linnæus."

"But how can *that* tend to his advancement in life?"

"How does it tend to the advancement of a rifleman to be a good shot? Sir Index knows better than any of us

'To whom to bow,—whom take into his coach.'

He is asked every where, as a sort of Companion to the Almanack. When any one of note dies, he instructs the Obituarist of the Illustrated News where and when he was born, and who was his great-grandmother; small facts, which the gaping and much-be-bored public swallows with the utmost appetite, but which you, my dear Miss Corbet, who, I perceive, are deficient in the boss of Eventuality, care no more about than for the pedigree of your kitten."

Recalling to mind the false witness she had formerly heard borne by Mr. Marsham against

the Turberville family, Tiny accorded little faith to his testimony.

A moment afterwards, he was down upon Lord and Lady Ackerdoyle.

"Ack. is a mite seen through a microscope!" said he, with an indulgent smile; "the prize-bantam of the political poultry-show, who fancies himself under the necessity of crowing pianissimo, lest his clarion should rattle down St. Paul's. It is quite refreshing to hear him apologise for his marriage,—as a boyish weakness—his only one,—of which he is a little ashamed. Whereas, if he did but know it, people tolerate his heavy book for the sake of its pretty frontispiece; and regard that charming wife of his, as poor Ackerdoyle's Grace before meat."

As the arrangement of the guests at dinner left Miss Corbet, as the unmarried lady of the party, to the arm of Bob Horsford, George Marsham, or Victor Ommany, it was a relief when Lady Frere, who lost no opportunity of

putting forward her future brother-in-law, assigned her to the care of the latter; more especially as her neighbour on the other side was Sir Justin Roche, concerning whom her curiosity was slightly awakened.

"I am delighted to hear that you will be present at the Park Lane christening," said the young guardsman, with an air of gentlemanlike deference, differing widely from his pert familiarity of former years, "It is to be a very brilliant affair."

"To me, it will of course appear so," she replied. "The eyes of a country cousin are easily dazzled."

"The Highams are so popular,—Lady Higham so much liked, her husband so much respected,—that any party of theirs must be a success. But *you* must feel a double interest in the event,—you, who, as of Rawdon descent, are almost one of the family."

"Of Rawdon descent?" reiterated Sir Justin Roche, chiming in, and addressing

himself to Miss Corbet;—"On the paternal or maternal side?"

"My mother was a Rawdon," she replied, amused to find him parade his foible on such slight provocation.

"An ancient and substantial family, the Rawdons; holding lands in Hertfordshire from the time of Henry the Sixth. Obtained the Manor of Heckington in the seventh of Elizabeth,—repeatedly Knights of the Shire. Supposed to have refused a peerage from Sir Robert Walpole. Much to be lamented that the late and present representatives of the race have exhibited no interest in public life."

"My cousin is still so young,"—— Tiny was beginning. But Sir Justin was there to talk, not to listen.

"Old enough to show pretty plainly the bent of his inclinations. Absorbed in tobacco and æsthetics,—the bane of the rising intellect of Britain: a modern disease, like the

potatoe blight, or diptherite. Before a lad leaves Eton, one may guess, with tolerable accuracy, whether he be likely to embark in politics."

"Are we to infer, Sir Justin, that you foresaw in my friend Marsham here the Junius of the century, on that never-to-be-forgotten fourth of June, when you picked me up under the table at Serly Hall, and carried me off to a tent; endeavouring to sing 'Floreat Etona' to the tune of 'Rule Britannia,' after a fifth bumper of champagne?"

"My acquaintance with Marsham commenced more decently," retorted Sir Justin, who hated to be catechised. "Some years before you and young Rawdon of Heckington attempted to commit suicide with Windsor champagne, I had the pleasure of hearing him recite his prize poem at Cambridge. You remember," he continued, trying to catch the ear of the pamphleteer, who was conversing with Lady Ackerdoyle, in whispers which he

endeavoured to render compromising, though they regarded only the age of a thorough-bred mare of which she was negociating the purchase. "I can't precisely date the year; but it was the term that young Huntsnore, the Duke of Lancashire's son, took his double first, and broke his collar-bone with the harriers."

By this time, Sophia Corbet was engaged with Captain Ommany in the discussion of old times at Higham Grange.

"I remember with gratitude how patient you were with me in my whelphood," said he. "As to the Highams, their kindness both there and in town, has been everything to me. Our whole neighbourhood rejoices at their new honours, and the birth of the heir who is to represent them."

"Their whole neighbourhood, perhaps; but I suspect not their whole family," again interposed Sir Index. "It was always set down as one of Brookdale's judicious specs,

that he married the only sister of a confirmed old bachelor in the enjoyment of a splendid property; and what Sir James Armstead meant by marrying, a dozen years afterwards, without asking the consent or blessing of his brother-in-law, I presume Lady Higham's pretty face can explain. However, it don't much matter,—that is, it oughtn't to matter. That only daughter of the Brookdales will eventually come into a handsome fortune. Though something under five thousand a-year is a poor pittance for even an Irish peer, it will be no bad inheritance for Miss Barnewall."

"Hear it ye senates (and senators), hear this
truth sublime,"

exclaimed Bob Horsford, who had been a careful auditor of the holding-forth of Sir Justin. "Hear it, O Marsham, M.P.! who keep a bye-kalendar of heiresses. Poor little

the stable to reason," said Bob Horsford. "Who knows but, in time, he may be allowed to experimentalise on the Cabinet or the Bench of Bishops?—Lord-taming would be rare sport for a Yankee!"

"But why misdoubt an invention because it reaches us from West to East?" observed Lord Ackerdoyle. "The tides of civilisation are evidently beginning to flow in that direction."

"We have so long been accustomed to regard our Transatlantic friends as able getters-up of Popular Delusions—" Sir Barton was beginning.

But Bob Horsford unceremoniously broke in with—

"All Barnum—all Barnum!—I wouldn't embark in their clipper-yacht, for the chance of bringing home the Golden Fleece. I doubt if I should even fancy myself dead, if shot through the head with one of Colt's Revolvers!"

"Yet they are warranted to penetrate the

thickest deal board," added Marsham, coolly.

"I am afraid we are a little too apt to bite our thumb at Brother Jonathan," observed Lady Wrexham, hoping that no one but herself had overheard this ill-bred personality. "We should not betray jealousy of the triumphs of our Ishmael. When it was reported, many years ago, that Charles Dickens was going to America to study character—'Why give himself the trouble?' said my friend Lady Holland. 'If he want to see *vulgar* people, let him try the second-rate society of our manufacturing towns.'—Longfellow, Prescott, Emerson, Hawthorne, and the grandest scenery in the world, were not accepted as extenuating circumstances."

"I entertain no doubt," broke in Lord Ackerdoyle, seizing the first opportunity that presented itself for a prosification, "that, seven centuries ago, the Orientals denounced the invading Crusaders who poured in upon *them*

from the West, as equally 'vulgar.'—And vulgar they certainly were, if ignorance of the arts of civilisation constitute vulgarity. A Norman Baron was a coarse freebooter,—a Saxon Thane, a savage: gross in their habits, —ruffianly in their morality. Even that pearl of chivalry, Cœur de Lion, the darling of poets and sculptors, when he stole the falcon from the poor Sicilian peasant, and knocked him down for remonstrating, was little better than the drunken gent, or 'vulgar' Yankee.

''Tis distance lends enchantment to the view.' "

"Vulgar is not only so arbitrary but so vulgar an epithet," observed Sir Barton, "that even to apply it is vulgarising."

"Yet how potent are its effects," rejoined the pedantic young lord, "in the hands of some noted critic, intent upon burking the aspiring genius of a young actor; or of some crack speaker, resolved to garotter a new member; or even some jealous chaperon,

resolved to crush a promising débutante!—How many reputations have been prematurely blighted by that miserable word!—Byron stigmatised Keats as vulgar,—little suspecting that, before a quarter of a century elapsed, *his* lyrics would be recognised as among the most refined of his day. Nay, a popular publisher once inveighed to me against the vulgarity of Sir Edward Lytton's quaint title for his romantic comedy of 'The Sea Captain,' which he thought might be advantageously changed to 'The Naval Officer!'"

"Superciliousness and affectation are among the worst phases of vulgarity," rejoined Sir Barton. But in order to put a full stop to such very heavy criticism, some fine old Hock was judiciously brought round, which rendered the conversation general.

People usually *tried* to render it general when Lord Ackerdoyle was at table:—his prize essays, without the power of "skipping," being rather a formidable specimen of table-talk.

CHAPTER IV.

Lucretia Rawdon fully justified Miss Corbet's reliance on her good sense, by declining to join the christening party. But she was not the less interested in her young cousin's preparations; and insisted not only on the most appropriate dress that Gladman could supply; but that the late Mrs. Corbet's jewels should be sent for from Northover, and placed in order for the occasion.

When therefore poor Tiny, who had been a

little overcome by the church service of the morning, (to the serious responsibilities of which she alone, perhaps, of the large party congregated on the occasion, lent an anxious ear,) surveyed the preparations for her evening toilet, she felt almost as much overpowered by the pomps and vanities she was about to assume, as by those she had that morning renounced.

She had been not a little amused, some days before, by the indignation with which Lady Brookdale resented her brother's supineness in not having secured a bishop to officiate at the christening of the future Lord Higham. Even Mr. Rawdon seemed indifferent to the texture of the sleeve which was to support the infant head of his little Sophia. "At *least*, it ought to have been the Reverend Timothy Snooks, domestic chaplain to the Right Honourable Lord Higham!" Instead of which, both fathers considered the curate of the parish a fitting officiator; and

the service was consequently well read, and free from those blunders which occasionally occur when very venerable members of the hierarchy, long disused to professional duty, turn to the wrong page, and attempt to bury, church, or marry, some hapless babe as yet unchristianised; like the honey-combed gun of a government-battery, which, when put in requisition for a royal salute, explodes at the wrong extremity.

But all her gravity gave way under the pertinacity with which poor old Lucretia insisted that Sophia Corbet, the daughter of Sophia Rawdon, must do credit to the new Sophia engrafted on the family.

"There!—Now you look something like! I only wish your poor old grand-mother could see you, my dear!" said she, when Tiny, adorned with her beautiful pearls, and magnificent bouquet and bracelet clasps of brilliants, was submitted to her inspection. "One seldom sees such pearls now-a-days;—been in

the family since the days of George the First, when Lady Araminta Rawdon brought them with her as part of her dowry—(her father, you know, was Governor-General!) The stomacher was set in Paris, by that famous jeweller whom Madame de Pompadour brought into vogue,—for your grand-aunt Sophia, your mother's godmother; and I don't suppose it was worn twenty times, in either of their lives."

"A good lesson on the folly of investing large sums in diamonds, when the position of the owners does not necessitate the display," argued the sage Placidia. "This is the first occasion, and may very likely be the last, on which I shall require them ere they descend to *my* little god-daughter."

Had poor old Lucretia witnessed the effect produced in Park Lane by the splendours she had created, she would have been more than satisfied.

The Rawdons of Heckington had never been

more brilliantly represented than by Florence and Sophia. But Tiny carried the day. Mrs. Rawdon's pretty face had been seen before,—*often* before; and though never in such beauty, the avidity of the public eye for novelty, and of the public tongue for something strange to prattle about, assigned every advantage to "the lovely Miss Corbet, the great West Indian heiress."

Not a soul present, except the intimate circle of the Highams, recognised in that richly-dressed beauty the fair girl who, some years before, had passed for a poor relation of the family; and their enthusiasm was consequently unbounded. It is so much the practice of heiresses—as if to demonstrate the even-handed justice of providence—to be ugly and disagreeable, that this rare exception was duly appreciated.

The foreign diplomatists male and female who crowded the ministerial *soirée*, could not quite reconcile themselves to such costly

jewels worn by an unmarried girl. But the evidence of great wealth usually carries its own apology; and even the objection raised against Placidia's gentle face by certain full-blown London belles, of being "too pale and statue-like," was invalidated before the evening was over, by the bloom raised upon her cheek partly by the heat and over-brightness of the room, but still more by finding herself an object of universal attention.

Yet in her own cool quiet room, long after Lucretia Rawdon, with her curiosity satisfied by ample details of the *fête*, had left her to the repose she much needed, the flush upon her cheek remained unabated.

It was not, however, altogether indicative of pleasant emotions. Her eye had been dazzled, her ear gratified; but her heart waxed sore within her. Not even on that memorable day when she returned to Grenfield House from the brilliant wedding of Amy Horsford, had she felt more deplorably forlorn than on

the present occasion. At the Clevelands ball, she had been a stranger among strangers. Now, she felt a stranger among those with whom she ought to have been heart in heart.

Not a syllable had Arthur deigned to address her, either during the morning's celebration and breakfast, or the ostentatious dinner and evening parade.—He had seen her present his infant at the font; tears of heartfelt emotion falling on its gorgeous robe as she accepted the responsibility of its sins, and renounced in its name all worldly temptations. He had seen her almost alone in that brilliant crowd, not the less unsparing and ungracious for being composed of the greatest in the land. —Yet not once had he come forward with a word of kindness or encouragement, to offer her a seat, or refreshment, or the ordinary courtesies of kinsmanly regard.

She had observed him closely. In spite of the importunate attention of which she had been the object from others, she had not

overlooked the father of her little Sophia. But though apprised by tradition and observation of the power of beauty over the human heart, she was not prepared for the utter prostration of mind with which Arthur submitted himself to the influence of his wife. He seldom took his eyes from her face. Move where she might, he watched her with the idolatry of a devotee. Not with a *happy* devotion. Not the religion which distils balm on the soul, or imparts rapture to the countenance. But an uneasy, vigilant worship, which affords no consolation.

Had it been otherwise, had the morose Arthur Rawdon, who recently visited her at Northover, appeared metamorphosed into a tender, happy, confiding human being, she would have been content. But it was a wretched confirmation of evil to see him thus uneasy in his domestic affections; yet so absorbed by their ascendancy.

There he stood, throughout the evening;

his eyes fixed upon Florence:—neglecting his friends—neglecting his acquaintance—neglecting the common urbanities of society.

Tiny was not one of those who decry the influence of personal beauty. She understood that, at first sight, a man might be enthralled by the expression of a sweet countenance or the tints of an exquisite complexion. But that after more than two years of married life, a woman of shallow heart and narrow understanding should retain her power over another by mere force of external charms,—even to the point of rendering him insensible to the claims of kindred blood, of human friendship, of worldly demands on his attention,—afforded her an unexpected insight into human weakness.

Poor Tiny!—who fancied she saw so far—yet was blind to what was passing within reach of her hand!—

Of human passion and its pleadings, she had some experience; but its nature was of

the mildest. The prudent secretary who now officiated so admirably at his own dinner-table, had been far from an impetuous Romeo; and neither the insidious whispers of George Marsham, nor the insect-like buzz of little Ommany, had inspired her with much respect for courtship. Her reputed wealth had of late brought to her feet suitors of any thing but chivalrous bearing; and her nearest cognisance of the demonstrations of genuine attachment consisted in the *brusqueries* of poor Willy. For this she was beginning to blame and mistrust her own attractions.

As she laid aside the glittering baubles which had attracted so much jealousy, and glanced at the reflection in the glass of the sad face which, she fancied, had derived its sole charm from their brilliancy, the thought that *she* should never be loved as Florence was loved,—absorbingly,—blindly,—passionately,—brought tears into her eyes.

In those fascinations which confer the

power of attracting, she must unquestionably be deficient. Her reserve,—some people called it pride—chilled perhaps the sympathies of her fellow-creatures. But for that, poor Willy would have overlooked imaginary obstacles of his own creation; and instead of flying to Jamaica, to sacrifice his life and render her rich and wretched, would have made her his wife; living to worship her, as his sister-in-law was now worshipped.

One circumstance alone, in the course of the evening, had afforded her a moment's pleasure. Lady Higham had found an interval in her attendance upon Royal Highnesses, and curtsies to guests of high degree, to whisper her regret at finding her dear Tiny persist in leaving town the following day.

"I shall soon be alone here," said she. "Next week, Florence and her husband start for Craigdonnon."

"So soon?"

"The salmon-fishers call it late. But I

have promised, when the children are at Heckington, to run down by the train some Wednesday; when, if there is no Cabinet, Higham can accompany me, and see what you are all about.—It affords the greatest comfort to Arthur and Florence that you are likely to spend the remainder of the summer at home; and that the little ones will be safe under your protection."

Too pleased was Tiny at the prospect, to resent the haughty recklessness which prevented the Rawdons from expressing this feeling to herself. It was enough that the handsome young rebel and his sister were to be her charge. Evvy would afford her constant excitement; her soft little goddaughter, a daily solace.

It was perhaps the smile which stole over her features as she listened to the announcement, which encouraged Robert Horsford, on whose arm she was leaning on her way from the tea-room, to believe that his exaggerated

compliments were making a favourable impression; for that she had not heard a word he was whispering, would have appeared incredible to so consummate an egotist.

Before she retired to rest, poor Tiny, no longer Placidia, had made up her mind to visit Curzon Street before she quitted town the following day; and obtain from the lips of Florence, instructions concerning the management of those dear children. But when the morrow came, the cold dew of morning reflection hung heavy on the overnight's enthusiasm. So early in the day, Arthur would certainly be at home; and, estranged as they now were, probably consider her intrusion a bore. She remembered, too, that she had detected the eyes of Mrs. Rawdon fixed with their worst expression upon her, the night before, as if in resentment or menace. Florence perhaps imagined that the diamonds and pearls she was wearing, formed part of the Rawdon inheritance, alienated from their right-

ful owner; for though Tiny in reality cared as little for them as for poor Mrs. Enmore's jars of pickled snakes, she could not but perceive that others coveted them with an ungodly coveting.

She found no courage therefore for an expedition to Curzon Street. "Yarrow" remained "unvisited;" and she left London with her mind clouded by fears that Mrs. Hartland of Shrublands might, after all, intervene between her and the darlings on whom her heart was intent,—the last Rawdons of Heckington!—Nor could the outspoken Lucretia forbear saying to her at parting—on seeing tears upon her cheeks,—"But why leave me then, my dear child, since you seem so sorry to quit town?"

"You must come down to Northover," was Tiny's evasive reply. "You who love the country for its own sake, and want neither partridges to shoot nor foxes to hunt, will bear with us in July, with the flowers in bloom,

the trees in leaf, and the cornfields ripening. Edgar will do the honours of his rabbits and carrier-pigeons to you, in return for all the London pleasures you have procured him."

It was lucky that the proposal did not square with the old spinster's plans. For she would have been sure not only to discover that there was a worm in the bud of Tiny's happiness; but, with the coolness and precision of a surgeon, cut straight to the source of the evil. And what would not poor Tiny have suffered, if, when Arthur brought down the children and nurses to establish them at Heckington, Lucretia had accosted him with reproaches for his capricious coldness to his cousin!—

As it was, Nature, left to her own impulses, negociated between them with more delicacy. —On the eve of parting with that little Evvy who clung to him with all the fondness of a nature impetuous as his own, Arthur's heart was softened. The carriage that brought them

down, stopped at Northover before they proceeded to the Hall; and both children and nurses were placed, with almost solemn formality, under the authority of Miss Corbet.

"You will be a mother to them during our absence, dear Tiny?" said he, in a voice tremulous with tears. "I do not make it a request;—for I know—I *feel*—that you love them!"

More by looks and gestures than by words, was the charge accepted; and Mrs. Milsum, though somewhat disposed to resent the insult of being placed under the control of "a young lady which couldn't know nothing in the wide world about the management of children," too well understood the "prumptory nature" of her Creole master, to gainsay the smallest of his decrees.

Still, as no movement had been made by Florence to signify her acquiescence, Miss Corbet judged it better to write and inquire her wishes concerning the arrangements of

her nurses and children. She even asked whether it would be more satisfactory to their mother to have them established at Northover, than at the Hall?

"Do what you like with them, my dearest Tiny,—for all you do is judicious," wrote Mrs. Rawdon in reply. "Arthur will be far better satisfied with whatever arrangements you suggest, than if I interfered."

Then followed a string of fulsome compliments concerning the sensation produced in London by her momentary appearance; and the number of victims she had left behind,—"including her poor brother Bob and Sir Justin Roche,—the latter of whom, indeed, had become so disordered in his memory, that at the Highams' last dinner, he had confounded the date of the Lord Chancellor's birth with that of Her Majesty's marriage!—In short, my dear," she added, "that touch-and-go visit of yours has slain tens of thousands. I only wish you would accompany us to the

Highlands, and supply an antidote to the miserable lethargy into which, alas! I am about to fall."

There was so much of Clevelands levity and Horsford flattery in the remaining page of the letter, as almost to neutralise the pleasure arising from its contents. But what did it matter? Those darlings were safe at the Hall, under her exclusive guardianship; and for three months to come, there would be no obstacle to her enjoyment.

That Alfred and Edgar had returned to Eton, the latter perfectly recovered, left her to the unmolested enjoyment of little Everard's ecstasies at first sight of the country; and able to act as mediator in his ever-recurring skirmishes with Mademoiselle Adrienne.

Poor Mr. Corbet, who had been blessed with good-tempered offspring, and to whom the sight of a thoroughly spoiled child was a novelty, could not forbear prescribing a little birch as an alterative for the turbulence of

young "Rawdon of Heckington;" in whose idiosyncracy he professed to discern a preponderating share of Reginald Enmore's.

Before a week was over, however, when he saw those dimpled arms clinging round the neck of "Tuddy," and witnessed the pleasure taken by his daughter in the passionate fondness of the child, he began to feel almost as lenient, and quite as proud of the little rebel as if it had been her own.

CHAPTER V.

Had Placidia been the woman to be moved by the slights or deferences of her country neighbours, she might have been amused by the altered tone of Mrs. William Hartland of Shrublands, after her visit to town.

Mrs. Horsford, on learning from her daughters that Bob could talk of nothing but the heiress, was beginning to make court to her at second-hand. Aware that all her remarks were conveyed to Northover by her faithful

Echo, she was careful to acquaint Mrs. Hartland that their dear Sophia Corbet had turned every head in London,—including those of Mr. Marsham and her son Robert: and warmly express her gratification that her dear grand-children were remitted to her valued care.

The lady whose chief avocation in life was to pick up Mrs. Horsford's "unconsidered trifles," now rushed into such a perplexity of admiration concerning the christening dress worn by Miss Corbet, which had bewitched May Fair, and the children dear to May Fair, who had bewitched Miss Corbet, that Tiny, unwilling to gratify the vulgar curiosity of her visitor by a display of her diamonds, and still more unwilling to indulge in the pedantry of exclaiming Cornelia-wise, while exhibiting the offspring of another— "*these* are my jewels:" almost scrupled to bring forward the noble boy who, if still shy, was no longer uproarious; or the lovely babe whose violet

eyes already promised to rival those of Florence.

"Very strange—that she should not have been called Florence, after her mamma," said Mrs. Hartland, though the portly nurse, Mrs. Milsum, was still in the room.

"People become attached to family names," replied Miss Corbet. "There have been several generations of Sophia Rawdons. Our grand-mother, and my mother, were both 'Sophias.' My cousin's next little girl will probably be a Jane, after poor Mrs. Enmore."

"I heard my missus say, ma'am, that if ever she *should* have another, she should be called Amy," said Mrs. Milsum, delighted to show herself better informed than the young lady of Northover.

"A charming name—and not the less so from bringing to mind a very charming person," observed Mrs. Hartland, who had been examining the baby as curiously through an eye-glass, as she would have done an ich-

neumon fly. "I am *so* glad to find that Lady Higham is coming down next week, for a flying visit of inspection!"

But *this* time, the better information lay with Tiny. Lady Higham was confined to her house, under the utmost uneasiness: the scarletina having broken out in her nursery. She was in fact in a state of quarantine; Victoria Barnwall never having had the disorder.

Poor Lady Higham was wretched. The Rawdons were at Craigdonnon; nor could even Tiny be asked to share her maternal cares, from respect to the new duties she had undertaken.

"Lady Higham is truly to be pitied," observed Miss Corbet. "A more anxious mother never lived, and she has persuaded herself that she shall lose at least one of her little sufferers."

"But there is no chance, I trust, of such a calamity?"

"On the contrary, Lord Higham wrote me word this morning that they were progressing most satisfactorily through the disorder. The real sufferer was his distracted wife."

Welcome, however disastrous, was the misfortune which authorised Mrs. Hartland to sit down and address to her dear friend a letter of condolence; and between her "enchantment" at being able to certify the prosperity of the nursery at Heckington,—and her "despair" at having learned the afflicting state of the nursery in Park Lane, her usually vapid communication was singularly *accidentée*.

When, shortly afterwards, the close of the session brought down the Freres to Clevelands, they supplied a pleasant supplement to the society of the neighbourhood. From Northover, Clevelands lay at a pleasant distance; within easy reach, yet not so near as to render it a resource for rainy days; and Sir Barton, though fond of surrounding himself in the country with the parliamentary colleagues and

intellectual associates who replaced in his case the collaterals which the despatch-box and hank of red-tape failed to supply, had recourse to Henry Corbet for those practical instructions in which he was as deficient as in uncles and cousins, and by which he hoped to convert into Diggings the small estate of Clevelands.

It was a comfort to Tiny to see her father associating with one by whom his useful knowledge was valued as it deserved, and over whom it gave him an advantage. But for Henry Corbet's interpretation, the farm-books of poor Sir Barton would have puzzled the solemn sec. quite as much as his own Blue Books might have puzzled the yeoman's son.

Still, in spite of his pains-taking, Downing Street stuck to the official man. His shooting jacket always seemed too tight in the arm-holes,—his wide-awake, as if it had figured the preceding day in Melton's window; and he was as little at his ease in Knickerbockers

or hobnailed shoes, as Corbet in straps and varnished boots:—he walked about his farm with a fastidious, pick-my-way air, which would have afforded a good study to Leech. The P. C. was not to the manor born; but enacted the part of Farmer Arable, as he would have assumed that of a man in buckram, or lord in velvet, at some royal fancy ball.

With the devout faith in his infallibility which becomes all good wives, Lady Frere regarded him, however, as a Coke of Norfolk; and contemplated the points he noted in his sheet-cows as admiringly as if they had been bits of Dresden china; and the sleekness of his oxen, as daintily as if they were fed with cake from Gunter's instead of the oil-mill. When the farmer of Northover broke in with *his* matter-of-fact notions about guano and top-dressings, she listened as Miranda may have listened to the rough jargon of Caliban.

But while her father was speaking oracles to

the *dilettante* agriculturist, Tiny was hearing from Bob Horsford glad tidings of the convalescent nursery transferred from Park Lane to St. Leonards; and from Mr. Marsham pleasant news of the sportsmen in the North. Charles Turberville, it appeared, was a better correspondent than is usually the case with a crack shot;—the grouse served daily on the Clevelands table being by no means the only good things that reached it from Craigdonnon. The joyous Charley described the whole undertaking as eminently successful. Half the party, which was twice as large as they had expected, was billeted off in bothys. Provisions had fallen short,—gillies were knocked up, and ponies as hard to come by as high-mettled racers,—newspapers were becoming mythical,—the post was an accidental institution. To the question, "Stands Scotland where it did?" the Craigdonnonians were able to return an answer; but concerning the position of London or Paris, they were doubtful. All the untoward-

nesses, in short, which seem to lend zest to the beauties of Highland-scenery and the adventures of Highland-sport, were in full bloom and bearing.

"And Florence,—has she quite recovered her strength, in this rough mode of living?" inquired Miss Corbet, unconscious that the picturesque sketch of Craigdonnon afforded by the Pamphleteer omitted only its French cook, iced champagne, pony phaetons, and heaps of new novels and periodicals.

"My cousin supplies an accurate game-list of killed and wounded," replied Marsham. "But he is not the man to trouble himself with the small health of his sister-in-law—or even wife. The true Great British sportsman, my dear Miss Corbet, is ruthless as a Scandinavian!—Charley sends me the weight of his salmon, and sum total of his ptarmighan. If Mrs. Rawdon had breathed her last—dead of the smell of whiskey-toddy, or of lying in the damp heather to watch

for deer,—he would only have mentioned it, because the funeral ceremony must have cost him a day's sport."

"Will the Rawdons be home soon, do you think?" she inquired, anxiously,—less from impatience of their absence, than dread of their return, when "her children" must be given up,—though even Evvy was beginning to call the little sister, whom he saw so often in her arms, "Tuddy's baby."

"Probably not till the beginning of winter," he replied; "and even then, they may be further delayed by being 'snawed oop' at Craigdonnon."

Instead of alarm, Miss Corbet's face betrayed unmitigated satisfaction. But she expressed only what civility required,—regret that Mrs. Rawdon should see Heckington when the trees were leafless.

"*Consolez vous!*—She will see enough of it,—perhaps too much,—before she dies," was the careless rejoinder. "*These* Rawdons

are the antipodes of their predecessors.—*These* Rawdons are gregarious animals, for whom the halls of their ancestors will never possess much charm, unless filled with twice as many fellow-creatures as they can conveniently hold. *These* Rawdons prefer those wildernesses of brick-and-stone, called cities.—And who, except a fox-hunter (or some other beast of the field,) could prefer the country in its state of a landscape in family mourning,—to Paris or Naples, brilliant, animated, humanised and humanising!—"

"As I am myself as great a bigot to country-life as you or the Rawdons to a town one, it would be waste of words to argue the point," replied Placidia, with an indulgent smile. "In *their* case, however, where there are duties to be fulfilled as well as pleasures to be enjoyed——"

"*Ah ça! du moment que vous faites de la morale,*" Marsham was beginning.—But Bob Horsford saw fit to interfere.

"Corbet! to the rescue!" cried he. "Leave the Derby breed of pigs to their sty; and come and take care of your daughter!—The most insidious fellow in Europe is endeavouring to undermine her principles in the most corrupt of languages!"

And amid the general laughter and confusion that ensued, the party broke up. Shortly afterwards, as they were driving together in the pony-phaeton, Miss Corbet could not forbear expressing to the prim Emilia her wonder that Sir Barton, so methodical and so matter-of-fact, could endure the vapouring of Robert Horsford or the more polished *persiflage* of Marsham.

"He must see so much of them in town, that I cannot understand his courting their society in the country!"

"Habit is everything. Officials get used to their colleagues. Mr. Marsham is to Sir Barton what, twenty years ago, Sir Barton was to Sir James Armstead; and I suppose

he remembers how pleasant he used to find it, when off duty, to be invited to Higham Grange."

Placidia's mind was enlightened. In this, as in all else, Sir Barton was aping the model on which he had formed himself. He wished the factious Pamphleteer and fashionable Gazetteer to be able to say of him, as *he* had formerly said of the head of his department—

> " See him I do,—and in the happier hour
> Of social freedom, ill-exchanged for power."

The despatch-boxes brought down every Saturday night by the young aspirants for Right Honourablehood, were in fact only a pretext.

On a sudden, however, a single despatch-box sufficed, and George Marsham appeared alone; but a plausible motive, explained the absence of the showiest of the two Downing Street butterflies. Lord Higham being compelled by routine of duty to

abandon his *lares* and *penates* and little convalescents, in order to take his turn of attendance on Her Majesty at Balmoral, poor Amy could not be left unprotected at the Grange. Amidst her thirty well-disciplined, attentive servants, surrounded by obsequious dependants and friendly neighbours, it was judged necessary that her wild, reckless brother should be by her side!

Such, at least, was the explanation afforded by the Pamphleteer; watching the while the candid countenance of Placidia, in hopes of detecting in her face confirmation of his suspicions that the suit of Amy's brother to Amy's friend, had been eminently unsuccessful.

He was too well acquainted with the nature of Bob Horsford's feelings towards children in general, and his little nephew and niece in particular, to have been hoodwinked into believing that his perpetual visits to Heckington, on pretence of avuncular affection, had any other motive than to waylay the heiress in

her walks, and beset her with his importunities; and one Sunday night, when the young secretary, after attending evening service at Heckington Church, insisted on returning to town by the late train, though office hours on a Monday morning imply a liberal eleven, he took it for granted that the man whose flightiness of speech and daring irregularities were so repugnant to his own better organised misdoings, had been bowed out from Northover.

There is perhaps no class of society in England more open to insult than its heiresses. Towards them, every species of unmannerly freedom is regarded as permissible. They may be wooed by comparative strangers, all but sword or revolver in hand. They may be addressed anonymously, or under names to them unknown. They may be importuned, harassed, outraged; yet in the sequel, find their resentment of such liberties denounced as arrogant and heartless. Above

all, those who have been acquainted with them in their less affluent days, and treated them, when poor, with disregard, may, in the first glow of their prosperity, start up like serpents from their winter torpor, and crawl, threatening, to their feet.

When Miss Corbet, for instance, announced with firm outspokenness to Robert Horsford, not only that she declined his proposals, but that it would be useless to renew them at any future moment, since under no possible circumstances could she change her mind, he became loud and insolent, and affected to reproach her with having "thrown him over."

Like other ill-conditioned men, he seemed to consider an heiress public property, in which every good-looking young fellow possessed a vested right. That she should resent so abrupt and presumptuous a wooing as, if attempted with a sister of his own, he would have treated as an offence, seemed to him an act of missish impertinence.

To Mrs. Rawdon, by whom a match with Tiny had been suggested to her brother as a last resource,—the desperate step which could alone retrieve his broken fortunes,—he addressed his complaints.

"You will be sorry to hear, my dear Flo.," he wrote, "that your motion has fallen to the ground. And when you bring to mind the dowdy little damsel of Grenfield House whom Amy was good enough to tolerate as her bridesmaid only because our goose of a cousin, Mary Tunstall disappointed her, I have scarcely patience for the coolness with which, having become rich by robbing poor Arthur of his birthright, she discovers herself to be too grand a *parti* for my father's son!—But it is all your fault, Flo.!—When you recommended me to try my luck with the yeoman's granddaughter, you ought also to have despatched instructions to your tame—I won't say '*cat*,' but *hyæna*,—to vacate the premises in my favour. What chance for a

rough-and-ready fellow like myself, nourished upon brandy-and-water and cigars instead of Seltzer water and sentiment,—so long as that Lovelace for the million, George Marsham, is perpetually muffing it by her side?—Confound the fellow!—Both at Clevelands and Northover, he was always sneaking after us on the watch, like a policeman in plain clothes; and the result was the unmitigated snubbing which I will never forgive either of them. Some day or other, Master Marsham may chance to find me playing the Detective with himself!"

In these assertions, as in most others, Bob Horsford indulged in exaggeration amounting to falsehood. At Clevelands, George Marsham *occasionally* met Miss Corbet, as a fellow guest:—Northover, he had never entered. Though Placidia was unentitled to exclude from Heckington Hall the brother-in-law of its owner, a forbearance which had more than once exposed her to an interview

with the individual so anxious to white-wash himself at her expense,—Mr. Marsham could plead no privilege for intrusion; and on his first arrival in Hertfordshire, she had issued such orders as secured her from his visits.

Her whole time and heart were, in fact, given up to the children; for whom her love was almost maternal. There was not, as in the case of most young mothers, an exacting husband with counter-claims on her time;—wanting to be walked and talked with,—to have his notes answered and new books cut and assorted; and she could consequently dedicate to them every hour of the day, and dream of the night. Immured in Harley Street during the child-hood of her little brothers, Tiny was enjoying, or the first time, the delight of watching the beautiful development, leaf by leaf, petal by petal, of the human blossom which it is woman's especial mission to cultivate and cherish.

She had, formerly, sometimes joined the general cry against the troublesomeness of little children; and even wondered what amusement Amy Higham could find in sitting, hour after hour, with a baby on her knee. But now, the rapid progress of her loving little Evvy, and the precocious intelligence she discerned or fancied in the countenance of her baby godchild, supplied every moment with unforeseen interest. Had they been her own children, she could not have loved them more. Had they been her own, she could not have loved them so exclusively.

At times, she found herself wondering whether, had Willy survived, he would have attached himself as she was doing, in spite of the Horsford blood in their veins, to these new representatives of his race; and, more than once, tears had found their way into her compassionate eyes, at the idea of that poor forlorn, loveless, Aunt Jane, who might have warmed up into tenderness had she

lived to behold the promising progeny of her first-born.

But would *she* ever have hung, as Tiny was doing, over the sweet little face of the new Sophia,—watching the light brighten in the depths of its violet eyes, like sunbeams reflected on a lake, as if responsive to the endearing words softly whispered in its ear;—or the movements of the feeble little arm and waxen hand, attempting to reach the loving face bent over it;—or some new inflexion in the coo imperfectly attempting to indicate its perfect satisfaction?—Would *she* have even relinquished her collection of snakes and centipedes, to have her knees climbed upon, and her dress destroyed, by an uproarious boy, beautiful and wilful as a panther's whelp, and at present only to be tamed by the caresses of Tuddy?—

No matter!—Enough that such companionship sufficed for the happiness of Placidia; who had begun to reckon the autumn

months she was enjoying, in spite of such interludes as Bob Horsford's insolent courtship, and Marsham's stealthy intrusions, as among the happiest of her life. She seldom wrote to Mrs. Rawdon; for she found that it was one of Mrs. Milsum's most valued privileges to despatch a daily bulletin to Craigdonnon; and with her cousin, she had altogether ceased to correspond. And thus, hearing of their movements only at third hand, through the Saturday visits to Clevelands of the Pamphleteer, her uncertain tenure of the pleasures she was monopolising tended largely to their enhancement. A change of weather, an early winter, might bring back Florence, at any moment, to resume her maternal rights!—

One clear bright Sunday afternoon in October, she was wishing herself joy of the steady openness of the weather, as likely to detain the sportsmen another month in the north. To facilitate Mrs. Milsum's weekly devotions in Heckington Church, (a relaxation to which

the Semiramis in dimity strenuously adhered,) the children always spent their Sundays at Northover; and while the infant was either airing in the sunshine, or laid to sleep by its nurse in a cot especially provided for it in Tiny's apartment, Miss Corbet devoted herself to the task of amusing Evvy;—endeavouring, as duty required, to interpose between their games of play as much of Dr. Watts as usually overclouds the Sunday afternoons of a well-regulated child.

On the present occasion, the boy would not hear of the Busy Bee. Mr. Corbet had just endowed him with his first humming top: the buzz of which, he found far more melodious; and Tuddy was forced to stoop and stoop, and spin and spin, till the braids of her fine hair became loosened, and her usually trim array was not a little disordered.

A sudden diminution of light in the Studio, caused her to raise her eyes from the floor where the little fellow was seated, intent upon

his toy; and on looking towards the darkened window, she perceived, leaning upon the sill, with a smiling face and in an attitude of intense admiration, the man who was expressly excluded from her sanctuary.

To persist, at that moment, in her sentence, was out of the question. Receiving no Sunday visitors, the servants, as well as Mr. Corbet, were at church, and the garden-door was open. In a few moments, he made his way, unmolested and unannounced, into the forbidden Studio!—

CHAPTER VI.

"WHEN you reflect, my dear Miss Corbet, that it *might* have been a ticket-of-leave man who profited by the defenceless state of your citadel to intrude upon you, I trust you will not resent my presumption," said he, scarcely advancing beyond the threshold till he had received from his startled hostess the over-gracious welcome usually produced by embarrassment.

"It is rather *my* duty to apologise," said

she, rising hurriedly from her knees, "that there was no one to introduce you into the house."

"Pardon me. I was most especially introduced into the house. I met Corbet on his way to church, who told me that I should find you at home, and alone; and that my aid in keeping your unruly little cousin in order, might not be unacceptable."

By this time, both were seated; and Evvy instantly proceeded to establish himself on Marsham's knee, with the paces of which he seemed as familiar as with a favourite pony.

"I fancied the Freres were in Yorkshire?" said Tiny, who was gradually recovering her Placidian composure. "Lady Frere wrote me word that they were to start for the North, on Wednesday."

"To me, unfortunately, she was less communicative. Having a general invitation to Clevelands for Saturdays and Sundays, I came down, this morning, as sure of my roast beef

and a kind reception, as if I had landed on my paternal acres. But the birds—(shall I call them the old or young birds?)—had flown!"

"So that you will have to return to empty, dreary London," replied the unsympathising girl, to whom her father had described, the preceding day, on his return from a few hours' visit of business to the metropolis, that he had seen nothing in town but lawyers, apple-stalls, and empty omnibuses.

"The Clevelands housekeeper makes so much of me, and the Sunday-trains are so ill-timed, that I shall probably wait till morning," said he, a little disappointed that Tiny did not second the hospitable invitation he had already received from Henry Corbet.

"But how came you to meet my father on his way to church, when your road from Clevelands lay in a directly contrary direction?" she inquired, her surmises suggesting the probability that such an invitation might have been made and accepted. And to

her surprise, the self-confident George Marsham appeared a little confused.

"As I am neither at the bar of the house, nor in a witness-box, I will not be browbeaten!" said he, attempting to laugh off his embarrassment. "Why convict myself of such want of gallantry as to have paid my first visit to Mrs. Milsum and her nurslings, at the Hall.—But, again, as at Clevelands, the birds (and still, I scarcely know whether to say the young or old,) had flown!"

Tiny was satisfied. She was far better pleased that he should have walked over from Clevelands for a sight of his friend's children, than in compliment to herself. Lest he should fancy her piqued by his explanation, she became more cordial; endeavouring to discuss Highland deer-stalking and Yorkshire covert-shooting, as if deeply interested in the sport enjoyed by Arthur Rawdon and Sir Barton Frere.

"In point of fact," rejoined her visitor, "poor

Frere cares no more for shooting, than I for astronomy. But as his fugleman, Lord Higham, cherishes remote instincts of sportsmanship, and as it has come to be reckoned among the canonical virtues of a cabinet-minister to be a good shot, Clevelands must have its pointers and retrievers, like other country seats that respect themselves."

"Sir Barton can afford to dispense with a good game-bag," said Miss Corbet—"so long as he figures honourably in the leaders of the Times."

"Thanks for your spirited defence of my *chef!*—But leaders in the Times, which possess a certain authority in the Ides of March, give place to the columns of *Bell's Life*, at the time of year when pheasants are counted by hundreds, instead of votes. Higham himself, on returning from Balmoral, was as proud of having killed a couple of royal stags, by a right and left shot, as of having obtained the royal assent to——"

He was interrupted by a smart kick on the shins from his little jockey; whose quick ear, detecting the approach of Nurse Milsum's portly tread, seemed determined to make best pace the short remaining portion of his gallop.

In order to escape a *tête-à-tête* with the Pamphleteer, (the hour being at hand for the return of the nurses and children to the Hall,) Miss Corbet proposed accompanying them; again pointedly suggesting to her visitor that *his* road to Clevelands lay in a contrary direction. But Evvy would not hear of separating from his steed; insisting that "Marshy," as he was allowed to call the *fleur des pois* of the F. O., should carry him on his shoulders, while "Tuddy's baby" fell to the share of Tuddy.

In compliment to a visitor's presence, the wayward will of the young heir of Heckington was for once allowed full license; and, disciplined by little Everard, and followed closely

by the two nurses, they set forth:—the evening sunshine streaming auspiciously on the cavalcade. The fine elms and beeches sheltering the road between the farm and the Hall, seemed tinged with gold; both turf and tree emitting the musky fragrance peculiar to the first and last vegetation of the year.

It was impossible not to be touched by the tranquil beauty of the landscape; and as Evvy and his palfrey kept up a constant interchange of sport and mirth, they arrived at the porch of Heckington a noisy, merry party, almost regretting that the walk was at an end.

As they passed the windows, Marsham was too much engrossed by the wilful charge who had blindfolded him with his own wide-awake, to take heed of an incident which greatly surprised Miss Corbet. The brightness of a glowing fire lighted up the windows of a small room adjoining the hall: the only sitting-room at present prepared for use.

"We seem to have been expected," said

she,—unable to account for the circumstance; while the head-nurse, whose hands were released by the usurpation of her double duty, having preceded them by a few steps in order to ring the hall-bell and secure immediate admittance, was still more astonished by the appearance of Mrs. Rawdon's footman, Robert, in place of the tidy little housemaid she had left there early in the afternoon.

The mystery was soon explained. The family had arrived!—

Had the announcement regarded the occupation of Heckington by an invading army, neither Tiny nor her companion could have looked more aghast. Perhaps, could they have followed their inclinations, both would have beat a retreat. But their coming had been too vociferously announced by the merriment of the little boy, not to have reached the ear of his mother. All they could do, therefore, was to hurry into the house, and rejoice her anxious eyes by the sight of her children.

As Miss Corbet paused a moment at the door, to remove, with something of a nurse's vanity, the silken hood which partly covered the fair face of her little god-child, Mr. Marsham, with Evvy still mounted on his back, pressed forward into the room. But while Tiny still lingered, to draw down the plaits of the little frock, and make the most of the charms of the last Sophia of Heckington, instead of the fond kisses she expected to hear showered by Florence on the cheeks of her son, she heard only a reproachful whisper, (probably addressed to Arthur) of "Abominably careless!—You ought to have ascertained whether the trains were altered."—

A moment afterwards, when she entered the room, triumphant at the idea that she was about to present to Mrs. Rawdon a pretty little girl, smiling and sitting up, in place of the helpless mass of finery she had left behind, great was her amazement to perceive that no Arthur was in the room!—Only

George Marsham, looking crestfallen and sullen.

Instead of advancing to meet her, and take the baby from her arms, Mrs. Rawdon sat gazing upon her, without the smallest token of recognition; with a wild, distracted countenance, as if absorbed in events a thousand miles from Heckington.

But this was perhaps because Master Evvy, instead of extending his arms lovingly towards her, kept exclaiming—"*Papa—papa!—Je veux voir mon petit papa!*"—Disowned and defied by one child, she seemed little disposed to recognise the other!

It was not, however, wonderful that the little boy was unwilling to exchange the happy face and sympathetic voice of "Tuddy" for the haggard, travel-stained woman, who reproved him in so hoarse a voice.

The first words of the astonished Sophia Corbet, who was beginning to doubt whether Mrs. Rawdon were quite in her right senses,

were—"Perhaps you would rather I should take them away?—Perhaps you would rather see them when you have rested from your journey?"

After a moment's pause, during which Mr. Marsham set down his unruly charge, the lady of Heckington successfully struggled to regain her self-possession.

"Thank you, thank you!—By no means," said she. "They have been away from me long enough already, and I am here only for an hour or two."

Then snatching into her arms the little girl, who instinctively recoiled from her dark bonnet and travelling-veil, she pressed her convulsively to her bosom, and burst into an agony of tears.

Poor Tiny, feeling completely *de trop*, now stole from the room to summon Mrs. Rawdon's maid, to whom her hysterics and their requirements were familiar. But she did not leave the house. She waited, lest her conso-

lations or aid should be required; having ascertained meanwhile from the old Heckington housekeeper that "Master was still in Scotland, and Mrs. Rawdon only passing through, on her way to Torquay, where old Mr. Horsford lay in the last extermity."

It was not, however, by Florence, but by Mr. Marsham, that more formal explanations were eventually conceded.

"Poor Mrs. Rawdon appears half out of her mind," said he, in a subdued voice, indicating a very different frame of mind from that in which they had entered the house. "She has not only travelled night and day from Craigdonnon,—(more than two days on the road!) but met with a bad overturn near Perth. You must have perceived that her arm was in a sling; and I cannot help fearing the concussion has produced injury to the brain."

"If she is sufficiently collected to have afforded you all this information," Miss Corbet was beginning—

"Not one word of it!—I have been talking to Robert, her old servant, who seems terribly anxious about his lady. It was her intention, it seems, but for a change of Sunday trains, to start for London as soon as she had seen her children, in order to proceed at once from town to Torquay, by the mail train."

Poor Tiny was not a sufficiently experienced traveller to remember that mail-trains do not leave London on the Sabbath day; and this plausible explanation inspired her with sincere compassion for the woman who thus defied fatigue and danger, that she might be present at her father's last moments. The strangeness of Arthur's conduct in not escorting, on so sacred an expedition, the wife to whom he was passionately attached, might have excited her surprise,—perhaps her mistrust,—but that she was only too well aware of his enmity to the Horsfords.

In a moment, she was with Florence; on whom Mademoiselle Justine was now in at-

tendance; and her travelling habiliments being partially removed, Miss Corbet was shocked to perceive how old she was looking; in face, pale as death; in figure, wasted to a degree that could owe nothing to her recent journey or accident.

"You seem sadly indisposed, dear Florence," said she with the utmost concern. "You cannot,—indeed, you cannot resume your journey to-night. You are quite unequal to further exertion."

"I should suffer far more by remaining here," murmured Mrs. Rawdon, in faint tones, to which her pale lips were scarcely unclosed to give utterance. "I must get on. I have been wretchedly delayed on the road.—I *must* get on."

"But if you take a good night's rest (which is indispensable for you in your present weak state,) you may still reach Torquay by to-morrow afternoon."

"I tell you, Tiny, I must go at once!—I

will go at once.—The same post-horses which brought me from Hitchen are to take me back to the station. There is a late train."

Too well was Tiny acquainted with her wilfulness, to persist in remonstrance. When Florence said "I *will*," nothing short of a miracle could deter her from her purpose. Aware that, to reach the Station in time, she must leave Heckington within an hour, Miss Corbet hastened from the room to give orders for immediate refreshment for Mrs. Rawdon, suitable to her delicate condition; and having, in traversing the hall, again encountered Mr. Marsham, she appealed to him to endeavour to dissuade their friend from her journey.

"I have just heard from Robert the particulars of her frightful accident," said she, shuddering as she recurred to it; "and I assure you poor Florence *ought* to have rest. Pray, *pray* assist me in prevailing upon her to remain here for the night!"

"I quite agree with you as to the pro-

priety of the measure; but I fear dissuasion is useless. In her present excited state, the best thing is to let her have her way."

"In that case," added Tiny, with perfect *naïveté*, "you can surely manage to escort her to town? If she choose to be alone, you can at all events travel by the same train, and see her safe to her hotel."

The Pamphleteer had too much command of countenance to do more than declare his desire to be of service; and on Miss Corbet's expressing an intention to send to Clevelands for his luggage, he replied that it was already despatched to the Station. Dinner he equally declined. After his late luncheon, to dine an hour later than usual, at his London club, would be no penance.

Thus reassured, she returned with a more cheerful countenance to the room in which Florence still lay extended on the sofa.

"What have you and Mr. Marsham been settling between you?" said she, in a peevish

voice, as Tiny re-entered. "I heard your voices together in the hall."

"That it would be far better for you to remain here quietly for the night."

"*Grazie, grazie!*—Admirably arranged for all parties!" interrupted Florence in her bitterest tone of former days.

"But that, if you persisted in going to town, so as to start by the first train for Torquay, you must not object to his escorting you. Indeed, indeed, Florence, you are not in a state to travel with only servants to take care of you!"

Mrs. Rawdon fixed her eyes wonderingly upon the face of poor Placidia, as if to satisfy herself that the suggestion was not ironical.

"Could Arthur have anticipated what you were about to undergo on the road, he would certainly never have allowed you to leave Scotland alone," added Miss Corbet.

"I *chose* to come alone. Where was

the use of annoying him by curtailing his sport?"

"At all events, ill as you are, he would be very angry with us all,—with my father,—myself,—Mr. Marsham,—if we allowed you to start without protection.—*Pray*, dear Florence, submit to our entreaties."

She submitted. She even consented to taste the arrow-root, peaches, and grapes set before her; while Mr. Marsham hastily partook, standing, of a crust and a glass of sherry.

When the carriage was announced to be in readiness to convey them to the Station, Mrs. Rawdon seemed suddenly to recollect that it was incumbent upon her to take leave of the children whom she had come to Heckington expressly to visit. But the interview was a hurried one; and her farewell to Miss Corbet constrained and cold.

It would have been cruel, however, to find fault with the deportment of a person under-

going severe bodily suffering, as well as hastening, in defiance of it, to the deathbed of one of her parents.

That she was not only bewildered by physical pain, but apprehensive that increasing indisposition might further delay the journey, was evident by her insisting on having Justine in the carriage with her. It was in vain that Mademoiselle protested she should "crowd Madame and Monsieur,—that she should be much better on the box with Robert."—Mrs. Rawdon abruptly replied that her services would probably be required on the road.

Thus doubly escorted, Miss Corbet became comparatively reconciled to the departure of her perverse friend.

CHAPTER VII.

"Poor Horsford!—If it hadn't been for that shallow, make-believe wife of his, the poor old fellow might have breathed his last at Clevelands, and been laid by the side of his parents, in his own parish," said Henry Corbet, with hearty sympathy, when his daughter recounted to him, at dinner, the startling events of the afternoon. "Better than I expected of Mrs. Rawdon, my dear, to start off and travel five hundred miles, in order to comfort her father's deathbed!"

"You would have said so, indeed, papa, had you seen how severely she was suffering from her late accident," replied his daughter.

"Deuced lucky, that her husband's friend, Mr. Marsham, should happen to have walked over from Clevelands at the right moment. Lucky, too, my dear, that I hadn't fixed him to dine with us; for he's a punctilious sort of gentleman, and might have thought it necessary to keep the engagement. To tell you the truth, Tiny, it's thought in the neighbourhood that he's sweet upon *you*. And as you are not, thank goodness, the sort of girl to take pleasure in leading a man on, only for the shabby triumph of throwing him over, I thought it as well not to invite him to a family-dinner, lest he and his varnished boots should take it for encouragement."

"You need not have been afraid, papa. It never would have occurred to him. Mr. Marsham is not a marrying man."

"I wouldn't swear to *that*. He mayn't be

a philandering man.—People with such over-hard heads have seldom over-soft hearts. But if ever I saw a chap with a sharp eye for the main chance, Marsham's the man; and marrying a young woman of fortune, my dear, is at least as pleasant a way of earning his bread as scribbling at a desk, year after year, till, on obtaining preferment, he has grown as bald and pompous as Privy-Councillor Frere."

"I suspect Mr. Marsham is far more enamoured of the freedom of bachelor life, than of the happiest home that love or money could procure."

"Folks don't think so, Tiny. The last time we were all at Clevelands, Mrs. William Hartland kept bothering me to know when the match was to be;—and whether she wasn't to invite Mr. Marsham with us the day we dined at Shrublands. She asked me point blank, whether you were not engaged."

Tiny, who had often wished to put her open-hearted father on his guard against the

artful cross-questioning of the little lady who officiated as Mrs. Horsford's deputy-catechist, now hinted her hopes that he had been very decided in his denial.

"I trust it is not necessary to say that if there were no other man on the face of the earth, my dear father," said she, "nothing would tempt me to marry Mr. Marsham;—a thoroughly unamiable person;—*more* than unamiable—unprincipled. But that I knew how much you disapprove Sunday travelling, I should have entreated you to accompany poor Florence to town this evening, rather than allow her to incur an obligation to him."

"I shall be glad to hear she's safe at Torquay," rejoined Mr. Corbet. "I like her better for starting off to the old Squire, than I ever thought to like Florence Horsford; and I like her husband less for letting her go alone, than I ever thought to like Arthur Rawdon.—I suppose, my dear, she'll write and tell you when she arrives?"

"I fear not. She was not cordial. Florence has so uncertain a temper!"

"Most fine ladies are capricious, I fancy. But she can't but feel thankful to you, Tiny, for all your love and kindness to her children?"

"Even of them, she took very little notice. It is a great comfort, to know, poor little things, that her prolonged absence will enable me to retain them for a time."

The prognostications of Miss Corbet were verified. A week elapsed, and no letter arrived from Torquay. And though the weather became cold and stormy, Mr. Rawdon still remained in the North.

However averse to the Horsfordian system of "pumping," Tiny was too anxious to obtain tidings of these ungracious people, to refuse herself a visit to Shrublands; where all that regarded the state of the family was sure to be known. But on observing to Mrs. Hartland that the newspapers had not yet an-

nounced the death of the poor old Squire, she was a little perplexed by the reply.

"*Death*, my dear Miss Corbet?—I am happy to say, he is better than he has been for months!—I had a letter some days ago, from poor dear Mrs. Horsford, written almost in spirits."

"The arrival of her daughter must have been as cheering to *her*, as Mr. Horsford's unexpected recovery to Mrs. Rawdon," observed Miss Corbet.

"*What* daughter!—*What* arrival?—Are not the Highams at the Grange, and the others still in the North?"

"Mrs. Rawdon passed through Heckington, nearly ten days ago, on her way to Torquay."

"I think you must be mistaken," said Mrs. Hartland, with an affable smile.

"We are told to believe only half we hear," rejoined Tiny. "But the evidence of my own eyes I cannot distrust. I am sorry to say, that they showed poor Florence to me ex-

tremely worn and ill, from the results of an accident she met with on her road from Scotland."

"Very extraordinary! — I wonder Mrs. Horsford should not have apprised me of her coming—"

"It appeared to be a hasty project, and hurried journey—"

"And it is still stranger, that my letter of the 25th should say nothing of her accident."

"Mrs. Horsford probably concluded that you had heard of it from myself."

That she might not be the means of putting superfluous surmises on the subject into circulation, Miss Corbet now endeavoured to divert the conversation by inquiries after Mrs. Hartland's prize-poultry, — her silky China fowls and speckled Dorkings; and, as she expected, the full tide of the little lady's vanity immediately streamed forth, effacing all trace of Horsfords or Rawdons.

A few days afterwards, arrived the Freres; and from them, Miss Corbet felt sure of authentic news derived from Higham Grange.

But alas! they cared as little just then for Mrs. Rawdon's movements, as for the flight of the swallows from their eaves. Lady Frere could think and talk only of Yorkshire. It was her first introduction to old English hospitality on its noblest scale; and Villa-life, or even the fluctuating proprietorship of the neighbourhood of Branshaw Combe, had not prepared her for the solid, well-established dignity of those old-fashioned families, who are as steady a growth of the Yorkshire soil as its mediæval oaks.

She was beginning to think no park worth mentioning that did not contain a ruined Abbey or Priory, and a dozen mile-stones; and seemed to look down on the sport of the best-preserved Manor, unless its woods could exhibit a spot or two notorious for a fatal poaching-affray; like the ghastly crosses which,

by the brigand-haunted way-side of Spanish or Neapolitan roads, record that some murdered traveller lies below.

But that her husband's head was screwed to his shoulders far more firmly than her own, the ambitious Emilia would instantly have attempted to Yorkshire-ise her moderate establishment; and thus afford a paltry abortion, resembling the dwarfed forest-trees of a Mandarin's garden. She seemed to experience as much difficulty in reinstating herself within the contracted limits of her own shire and domain, as was felt by the outwitted Oriental in replacing in his bottle the emancipated Djinn.

Even when Sir Barton, who was already off to Downing Street, returned from town, Miss Corbet fared no better. If the mind of the bald-headed P. C. remained unshaken by the sight of regiments of keepers and beaters, larders that might have victualled a navy, domestic gas-works capable of illuminating a

city, or forcing-houses that would have put the Hesperides to the blush, it was spontaneously recontracted into official pragmaticality by even momentary contact with Red Tape. Half an hour in Downing Street had re-endued Sir Barton with that superficial induration, which, from the moment he sets his signature to a state-paper to that which sets him up in marble in one of the aisles of Westminster Abbey, or in bronze on the Queen's highway, seems to convert the "complement extern" of a minister into artificial-stone.

"Yes,—he had seen Marsham, certainly he had seen Marsham," he replied, with an air of self-absorption, such as Lord Higham, in his Sir-James-Armstead days, had been apt to display. "Marsham was, of course, at his post. But there had been a vast accumulation of public business, in consequence of his own absence from town. That awkward affair of the Zuyder Zee-fishery had required their most serious attention; and during his stay in

town, despatches had arrived from Madrid. He had consequently had very little talk with Marsham, who, he was sorry to say, would be unable to get down to Clevelands for some time to come."

Disappointed on every side, poor Tiny's ignorance of Mrs. Rawdon's movements was anything but bliss. If either of the children should fall ill, where was she to address her? A rainy November confined them to their dull nursery at the Hall. She spent with them, however, a portion of every day; affording to little Evvy his usual exercise, by a game of play in the long gallery attached to the Tapestry suite.

In those former days when Heckington stood empty, and poor Willy's sudden departure from England perturbed her mind with even deeper anxieties than she was now enduring, Tiny used to stroll over from Northover to the deserted house; and soothe the disturbance of her spirit by wandering up and

down those still, desolate rooms, where she was secure from intrusion.

An amusing book of travels, from a female pen,* has recently recurred to a remark, frequently made, that the contemplation of a distant line of mountains, grand, tranquil, and immutable, exercises a composing influence on the mind.

Most true, as regards the works of Nature! But as regards the works of Art, the daily contemplation of a fine picture-gallery exercises an almost equally sedative power. Whatever the turmoil of our feelings, whatever the worries of domestic life, *there*, still and solemn, hang those sage, grave ancestral faces, which seem to whisper, "We, too, lived and suffered, — struggled and desponded.—And what are we now?—Be patient—be calm!—Mortal cares are transient as the ripple on the stream."

On this account, a national portrait-gallery

* "A Timely Retreat."

possesses a two-fold value. History, which grows dusty on the shelf, retains its lifelike brightness on the wall, and a tranquillising influence emanates from its lessons. Revealed by Froissart, Holinshed, Clarendon, or Macaulay, it may stir our passions, or aggravate our prejudices. But if the selfish despotism of Charles or Strafford, depicted by the pen, arouses our indignation, the pensive intelligence of the one, the noble sternness of the other, as bequeathed to us by the pencil of Vandyck, plead for them from the grave. We turn away, reflecting rather on their atonement, than their fault; and smile in remembering how little the worst of sovereigns or ministers can effect, to discompose the majestic system of the universe.

Even a Spanish King, or idiotic Infanta, transfixed to the wall like some remarkable reptile or insect, by the genius of Velasquez, becomes as powerful a teacher of the littleness of human greatness, and the absurdity of

monstering our miserable nothings in a world where "DIEU SEUL EST GRAND," as the most eloquent homily indited by the wisest of Primates.

But this time-cherished consolation was now lost to Tiny. The old familiar faces of her forefathers had long been taken down and massed against the wall of a lumber-room, till the moment arrived for their re-distribution under the authority of the new proprietors of Heckington; and it only embittered her vexations to wander up and down those empty, cheerless rooms, whose walls, like a human face devoid of expression or meaning, presented a blank.

The "Girls with the Cherries" would have kept her company in her solitude:—the white and gold cornices and panels were cold as her own heart! The voice of the Heckington of to-day spoke of the morrow, not of the past;—of future gaieties, future frivolities, future penalties and pains!—

She was wandering there in the twilight of a November day, while the rain poured unrelentingly against the windows and splashed from the sills, till the brougham which was to fetch her home to Northover made its appearance; having taken leave of the children in their warm, snug nursery, that she might be no obstruction to the tea-taking of Mrs. Milsum. But for once, Semiramis was tempted to disregard that favourite banquet; and having stealthily followed Miss Corbet into the chilly saloon, carefully closed both the doors, before she accosted her.

"Asking your pardon, mom, for the introosion," said she, "I should be particlar glad to know whether you've heard lately from my missus?"

"Not since she was here, Mrs. Milsum. You have perhaps received a letter?"

"Not a line, mom,—which makes me very oneasy. I have written more than once to Master, at Craigdonnon, as Missus Rawdon

desired, with accounts of the dear children; and once to herself, without orders, to Torquay. And I was just a thinking of writing again; when to-day's second post brings a letter from Missus Rawdon's Mamselle Justine to Master Evvy's Mamselle Adrienne, which has set me quite of a flurry.—I wouldn't name it to you, mom, in the nursery, lest Master Evvy, poor little darling, should hear."

Tiny's heart beat quick at this solemn opening. Luckily, a window-seat was at hand, for the unfurnished saloon contained not a single chair.

"It seems, mom, according to Mamselle's account, that Missus has been most serously ill,—most dangerously ill!"

"And where is she now?" faltered Miss Corbet, in some degree reassured by the past tense in which the alarming intelligence was conveyed.

"At Higham Grange, mom. But it was

only a few days ago they was able to undertake the journey. She was took with an attack of nervous-fever the very night she *would* leave this, in spite of all you said to dissuade her.—And there they might have been, all as if in the wilderness, as one may say, not knowing as they'd a friend or relation in town."

"How strange that Justine, or Robert, should not at once have telegraphed for me! —I could have been with her in a couple of hours."

"The servants had missus's express commands to do nothing of the kind: most probable, mom, because she didn't wish to alarm master.—In course you'd have instantly written to inform him of her danger; more particular, because from the first he was opposed to her taking the journey.—She started, at last, when he was away at a bothy, t'other side of Craigdonnon Forest!"—

"But *now*, Mrs. Milsum,—*now!*—How is she *now?*"

"Much better, mom,—amost well. When it turned out that poor old Mr. Horsford warn't in the danger she'd fancied, and that her coming suddenly upon him was like to do him harm, she went straight down into Somersetshire, and from thence wrote to master, who lost no time in rejoining her."

That part of the story was the only one that did not surprise Miss Corbet. But, since Florence was convalescent and Arthur returned from the Moors, they would probably soon be at home?

Semiramis thought *not.*

"There wasn't no talk in Mamselle's letter of the return of the family to Heckington."

The following day, however, the pioneers of the brigade made their appearance, in the shape of the French cook with his *batterie de cuisine* and *marmiton;* the butler, and footman with their plate-chest. The establishment at

Craigdonnon was broken up, and the shooting quarters resigned to the proprietor.

Again a few days, and a legion of upholsterers and workmen from London brought instructions from Mrs. Rawdon concerning the unpacking and placing of the furniture; and confusion worse confounded, ensued.

But out of the noisy Chaos, Order gradually arose. Before the week was at an end, blazing fires in every room, and every room richly and appropriately furnished, created a new and cheerful family-home, within the astonished old walls of Heckington Hall.

CHAPTER VIII.

If "Tuddy" had experienced some little mortification at the coolness with which, at their last meeting, her little *protegés* were treated by their mother, she was amply repaid by the exquisite delight exhibited by Arthur at the progress made by his little ones during his long absence.

Previous to their return from Somersetshire, Florence herself addressed an affectionate letter of thanks to Miss Corbet, almost worthy

of the pen of that flourisher of moral arabesques, Mrs. Horsford;—apologising for the flightiness of her conduct during her previous visit to Heckington, on the grounds that she was suffering from concussion of the brain, and scarcely accountable for her actions.

"She was now convalescent," she said, "and coming home to enjoy a cheerful, sociable winter at Heckington, with her family and neighbours; among the nearest and dearest of whom, she accounted the inmates of Northover."

And Tiny, who foresaw that it was only by bearing and forbearing with the caprices of her cousin's wife she should retain the smallest influence in her nursery, prepared herself to be patient and friendly. That the same envelope contained a still more cordial note from Lady Higham, expressing her gratification at the prospect of their speedy meeting, (as Lord Higham, whose public duties must

replied Miss Corbet, more cheer-

you know, ungrateful girl, the
uld afford my husband to be of
?"

he truth," added Miss Corbet,
must not think ungracious, I
y, unless with necessity in the
my bright-eyed, bright-hearted
oar of an official desk. Don't
nd !—Don't remind me that the
ne with a clerkship, may end as
n't show me Sir Barton Frere,
C., and tell me (as Mrs. Hors-
) that *his* cradle was an anony-
h-box !—"

retorted Lady Higham, a little
ne a man must have *some* voca-
annot be a nobler one than to
lives and liberties of his fellow-
d command direct communication
one?"

danger to himself if his selecton of a career should prove a blunder."

"Nonsense, nonsense, my dear Tiny!—You are not yet three-and-twenty.—And even if you should *not* marry (as you certainly will), and have children of your own, how distant a chance has your heir presumptive of succeeding to your fortune!"

"Even if I married, which I never shall, I could make such an allowance to my brother as would enable him to hold his own in the world far better than as a reluctant clergyman or incompetent lawyer."

"But are the learned professions the sole alternative?—Can Higham's interest be of no avail?—My husband thinks highly of your pupil, dear Tiny, both as to faculties and disposition; and, being quite resolved that he shall never succeed to your property, is bound to provide for him."

"Heaven forbid that I should shelter poor Alfy under a 'Take care of Dowb,' species of

protection!" replied Miss Corbet, more cheerfully.

"Not when you know, ungrateful girl, the pleasure it would afford my husband to be of service to you?"

"To own the truth," added Miss Corbet, "which you must not think ungracious, I should be sorry, unless with necessity in the case, to chain my bright-eyed, bright-hearted brother to the oar of an official desk. Don't shake your head!—Don't remind me that the man who begins with a clerkship, may end as premier. Don't show me Sir Barton Frere, Bart., and P.C., and tell me (as Mrs. Horsford once did) that *his* cradle was an anonymous despatch-box!—"

"Surely," retorted Lady Higham, a little ruffled, "since a man must have *some* vocation, there cannot be a nobler one than to protect the lives and liberties of his fellow-subjects, and command direct communication with the throne?"

"Why generalise from a single instance?—You are thinking of Lord Higham,—an exceptional case! Alfy Corbet has neither *his* birth, nor fortune, nor abilities. Think of the multitude of sign-painters and stone-cutters who have grovelled and starved, compared with the *one* Raphaël and *one* Michael Angelo!"

"But Alfy will not starve, even if Sophia Corbet should relent in favour of one of her many discarded suitors."

"Would that you were as sure of the things you wish most in this world,—that your father's strength would rally,—or Lord Higham obtain the seals,—or little Jemmy cut his first tooth without fever,—as that Sophia Corbet is the name that will be inscribed on my coffin!"

"Don't say so, dear Tiny,—don't,—*pray* don't say so. If you think it and intend it,—don't *say* so!—The world is so wicked!" cried Lady Higham, letting her work drop helplessly into her lap.

"Wicked, *tant que vous voulez.* But how is its wickedness responsible for my spinsterhood?" rejoined Miss Corbet, who, though tolerably used to the kind-hearted Amy's misapprehensions, could by no means follow her line of reasoning.

"No matter—let us drop the subject, Tiny. —I can't think how we came to talk of it.—I had completely made up my mind to say nothing to you about it."

"*Now*, you excite my curiosity in earnest!" said Miss Corbet. "It is so unlike *you*, dearest Amy, to have reserves from your friends, that on this occasion it seems premeditated treachery."

By this accusation, Lady Higham was agitated to tears; and no sooner did her sobs reach the ear of her little girl, who was contentedly setting out a toy-farm of Evvy's in the corner of the room, than the poor child's playthings were hastily flung down, her mother's knees climbed upon, and her little fond-

ling arms clasped round the neck of Lady Higham.

"Naughty, naughty Tiny, to make my mumsey cry!" she exclaimed, amid a shower of kisses.

By the aid of much mutual endearment, composure was at length restored; and Miss Corbet made up her mind to provoke no further emotion on either side by renewing the discussion. But Lady Higham, having wept away her momentary distress, chose to be heard.

Having ascertained that the child was once more absorbed in the arrangement of her sheep-folds and cattle-pens, "The truth is, darling Tiny," said she, in a low whisper, "people have had the cruelty to assert that a mutual attachment and understanding subsists between you and Arthur."

"*Did* subsist.—Three years ago, no two cousins could love each other more dearly," replied Miss Corbet, perfectly unembarrassed. "But

since his return from Italy, we have scarcely spoken."

Lady Higham gazed at her with a face of wonder at her unconcern.

"And what makes you consider people 'cruel' who fancy us as affectionate as ever?" she continued, on finding that her friend attempted no reply.

"Not for fancying it, but for saying so. It is not cousinly affection they impute to you, but Love,—unlawful love,—*passionate* love! Knowing all that is said on the subject, dearest Tiny, it makes me miserable to see his picture hanging yonder on the wall!—"

Miss Corbet could scarcely refrain from a smile at what she regarded as Horsford exaggeration.

"No one who knows or cares about us,—no one who has seen us together since Arthur's marriage," said she, "can have failed to notice our mutual coolness. I have often felt hurt by his ungraciousness; and, forgive me

for saying so, imputed it to the influence of your mother, with whom I never was a favourite."

"Far more a favourite than *she* is with Arthur Rawdon."

"At all events," pleaded Miss Corbet, still unmoved by so vague and groundless a charge, "this wretched gossip, invented by Mrs. William Hartland, or some other equally mischievous country-neighbour, shall never prevent my owning an intention to succeed to the maiden-lozenge of my old cousin Lucretia."

"It ought—*indeed*, it *ought!*—I scarcely know how to make you sensible, Tiny, of the importance of my warning. You, who are so good, cannot appreciate the blackness of the sin imputed to you."

Miss Corbet started.—Her heart was beginning to swell. Chaste as Una in thought, word, and deed, it was foreign to her imagination to conceive that even the wickedest

of human beings could have devised a slander against her blameless life.

"A long tissue of evil and folly has originated this vile rumour," resumed Lady Higham, in a depressed voice. "After my marriage, my intercourse with my sisters became so interrupted, and my attention so engrossed by my children, that I am scarcely able to connect together either the facts or fictions of the case. When you were with me at the Grange, Tiny, you had not seen your cousin for years; and he was unquestionably, at that time, fondly attached to my sister."

"*So* fondly, that there was no sacrifice on earth he would not have made to hasten their marriage."

"But from the moment of renewing his acquaintance with *you*, my mother declares, he ceased to care for poor Florence; and certainly made some proof of his indifference by hurrying off to Jamaica without so much as a

parting interview. He remained there, too, far longer than was needful."

"Mrs. Horsford probably grounded her surmises, in the first instance, on the fact that, long before Arthur ever saw her daughter, a marriage was arranged between us by his family," said Tiny, with some dignity. "But in that project, neither my cousin nor I had the smallest share. For my own part, all the influence I ever exercised over him was to induce him to fulfil his engagement to your sister."

"When the fulfilment of such engagements becomes compulsory," rejoined Lady Higham, "surely it is better they should be broken off? But all was the fault of my poor mother! —She acted for the best.—She did for her children what she would have done for herself. When Arthur was disinherited by his brother, and his engagement with Florence seemed likely to be prolonged for ten or twenty years, she naturally wished it to be dissolved. But

I admit that this was no excuse for encouraging, in the interim, the attentions of Mr. Marsham, before there had been an explanation with your cousin."

A new light seemed to break into the mind of Sophia Corbet, on hearing the case thus presented.

"But the truth is," continued her friend, "the affairs of my poor father were, at that moment, reaching a crisis. You know all about us, dear Tiny; and I may therefore say, without any breach of delicacy, that the house in which sheriffs' officers are hourly expected, is not a spot for calm and prudent deliberation. I believe the sole object of poor mamma in tolerating Mr. Marsham's addresses, was to secure a home for Flo., when driven out of her own."

"But with such kind brothers-in-law as Lord Higham and Charles Turberville, surely she could never be in want of shelter?"

"So it has proved. But up to that time,

my husband had shown marked reluctance to have my sisters as inmates; and the Turbervilles were still strongly opposed to their son's marriage.—As to Robert, the future representative of our family, *his* protection would have been worse than nothing."

"Mr. Marsham, then, paid his addresses to Florence during the winter Arthur was at Jamaica?"

"So it appears.—Higham and I knew nothing of it. When the break-up occurred at Clevelands, and the family became established at the Grange, *we* were in London for my confinement; and afterwards, when we occasionally visited Somersetshire, nothing appeared more natural than that Mr. Marsham should be spending his holidays with his relations at the Abbey, and at length officiate, as best man, at Charley's marriage."

A heavy sigh burst from the overcharged heart of Placidia. How blind had she been to the events passing under her eyes;—how

incautious, in addressing that fatal letter to Fredville, which all but forced her cousin into the fulfilment of his long-repented engagement!—

"I cannot but suspect," resumed Lady Higham, perceiving how deeply her auditress was interested in her recital, "that Florence waited only for formal proposals on the part of George Marsham, (who, dependent upon his father, probably still hesitated,) to insist upon the rupture of an engagement which her conviction of Arthur's attachment to yourself had determined her to break off. Unluckily, no decided step had been taken when Arthur wrote, in so liberal and manly a manner, to assert his claims; and Mrs. Enmore's death, which immediately followed, having placed him in an independent position, my mother urged upon Florence that it was her duty towards her family to accept the brilliant position awaiting her."

"So that, after all, she married Arthur

with reluctance!" sighed poor Tiny, who was beginning to see more clearly through the meshes of this unhappy entanglement.

"I fear so. I saw nothing of it. At Mr. Rawdon's request, and in consideration of his family mourning, the ceremony was performed with the utmost privacy at Higham Grange; and, as you know, they proceeded at once to the Continent. Had either Higham or I been with them, we should probably have perceived what was passing; and even at the eleventh hour, prevented this disastrous marriage."

Miss Corbet's hands lay folded idly in her lap; her thoughts absorbed in reflection.—That she should have contributed thus presumptuously—thus cruelly—thus foolishly—to the misfortune of one so dear to her!—That she should have interfered in his destinies only to immerse in shame their time-honoured race!

Gradually she threaded, one by one, the

dark mazes of the past. Arthur, while redeeming at her instigation his pledge to a woman for whom his passionate attachment had subsided, had been blinded by the cunning manœuvres of Mrs. Horsford to her daughter's coolness towards himself. Amidst the flurry of his hasty return to England after learning the ruin of the Horsfords,—amidst the remorse and contrarieties arising from the death of his mother, he had taken that irretrievable step from which there was no retrogression!—

Still, it was herself,—herself chiefly,—herself *only*,—who was the origin of all these evils.

The first words she found strength to address to Lady Higham, were hoarse with repressed tears.

"Surely—surely," she cried, "when I saw them first in town, after their arrival from Italy, they were perfectly happy together?—Arthur appeared so passionately attached to

his wife!—When in her company, he scarcely took his eyes from her face."

"He *watched* her, I admit. But more from jealousy than love."

"Even at that time, then, Mr. Marsham's attentions were displeasing to him?"

While uttering the words, a painful reminiscence of George Marsham's visit with Robert Horsford to Mrs. Rawdon's dressing-room in Curzon Street, during the absence of Arthur, and Arthur's sudden return to the house without deigning to make his appearance, recurred to her mind.

"Mr. Marsham visited Rome during the first winter spent there by the Rawdons," said Lady Higham. "I fear that, even then, my sister was the object of his journey."

"Even then! — *Even then!*"—murmured Tiny, as if thinking aloud. "Oh! if one could only forget it all—if one could only forget it!"—

"Or hope that others had forgotten it.

That silly young Ommany related several anecdotes at Clevelands, to elucidate which, Sir Justin Roche luckily addressed himself to Higham to supply names and dates.—If he had asked the same questions of Arthur, *his* suspicions must have been aroused. At present, he knows only that Florence having, in one of her fits of wilfulness, quitted Scotland, met with a frightful accident on the road; and that Higham was too considerate to telegraph for him till her danger was over, and we had her safe at the Grange."

"But you have never yet explained to me how Lord Higham himself became apprised of her arrival in town?"

"Because a Queen's Messenger, whom he had despatched to Clevelands to summon back George Marsham who was urgently wanted at the Office, (and being Sunday the telegraph did not work—) returned to town in the same train with them; and, having proceeded straight to Park Lane, informed my husband that his

‘
You
tion
nor
titu
have
the
“
Corl
many
“ W
you w
stren
the s
witho
the
coffin
“ I
don’t
don’t
Lady
lessly

family,—would have induced him to interpose in her behalf."

"It surprises me, far more, that she submitted to his interposition!"

"How could she do otherwise?—It appeared a positive relief to Mr. Marsham when Higham insisted on separating them!—And, oh! Tiny,—dear Tiny,—that I should have to relate all this of a sister of mine!"—

Sophia Corbet, leaning towards her, tenderly embraced her. But she could not supply a single word of consolation.

"Remember, however," — added Lady Higham, "we ought *all* to remember in extenuation—*how* she was brought up—*how* she was advised—"

"Just as you, yourself, were brought up and advised—"

"But *I*, Heaven be praised, fell into the hands of a good and wise husband; who took pains to correct my faults and train me to a better frame of mind. Which reminds me,

Tiny, that we have strayed from the point of your dangerous intimacy at Heckington. In the vexatious interview between my husband and Mr. Marsham at the Northern Hotel, when Higham reproached him with the duplicity of his conduct, he vindicated himself by declaring that Arthur had married his wife when passionately in love with his cousin, and, so far from treating Florence with kindness or consideration, still cared only for *you*, to whom he had assigned the regulation of his household and care of his children;—insinuating that you had despatched them together to London, foreseeing the construction likely to be put upon their journey!—"

Poor Tiny clasped her hands in anguish and dismay. Could her thoughtless conduct have really exposed her to the suspicion of such infamy?—

"I have to crave forgiveness, my dear Miss Corbet, for forcing your door, in order to

inquire after your health," interrupted the voice of Lord Higham, who just then entered the room, closely followed by Sir Justin Roche. "Rawdon has been endeavouring to persuade us that you do not receive morning visits. But Sir Justin, having ridden over from Clevelands, instead of joining the foxhunters, for the express purpose of paying you his respects, would have been grieved to return with so poor an account of you as I was able to furnish."

Poor Sir Index, who had in fact attempted the expedition with the sole view of enlisting Lord Higham's parliamentary interest in favour of the gentleman whose Baronial progenitor had ayed and noed in the parliament of Edward the First, and whose nearest approach to gallantry consisted in a flirtation with a pet female mummy which he had presented to the British Museum, (defined by Bob Horsford as "a spicy edition of one of the Mrs. Pharaohs,")—was forced to come forward and

affect an interest in the fluctuations of Miss Corbet's pulse; the accelerated movements of which, at that moment, certainly justified some anxiety.

His prosy civilities, however, gave leisure to both ladies to recover their self-possession; and by the time Henry Corbet made his appearance, with as much mud splashed upon his overalls as might have fertilised a small desert, Sir Index having said his very long say to the daughter, was ready to discuss with himself the superior merits of the sixteen-stalked Egyptian wheat, which, rescued from the cerements of his beloved Psammenopha, and germinated under the influence of a new gas expressly invented for the purpose by Professor Faraday, was replenishing the fields of a noble duke much addicted to experimental farming.

"Consider for a moment, my dear sir," said he to the bewildered yeoman's son, who regarded all historical dates as "a thing devised

by the enemy" for the mental torture of school-boys, and occasionally gave as a toast, "The Three King Williams,—Billy the Conqueror, Billy the Revolutioner, and Billy the Reformer,"—"Consider for a moment what must be the vital power of a grain, originally raised in the time of Sabacco of Ethiopia, usurper of Egypt and founder of the twenty-fifth Egyptian dynasty—(I will not insult you by stating how many hundred years before the Christian Era, for Herodotus and Diodorus Siculus have doubtless familiarised you with the events of his reign, and especially of the improvements introduced by him into Egyptian agriculture;)—to the year 1848, when I first brought it under the notice of the Agricultural Society, at that time presided over by my late lamented friend, Lord Landslip, whose grandaughter I am told is about to be married to the new Swedish Ambassador, an ex-professor of the University of Upsal."

Poor Henry Corbet, whose faculties were

becoming alarmingly overclouded by the dust of ages, was beginning to inquire of the fluent and learned Theban whether the founder of the twenty-fifth Egyptian dynasty had stimulated the growth of this wondrous corn by a manure of Peruvian guano, or Syrian locust-pods, when Lord Higham, vexed to perceive a man he so highly regarded swimming out of his depth, rushed to the rescue; by a rhetorical dissertation on the influence of chemical discovery upon modern agriculture, which he knew would afford to the practical farmer the best of the argument, and allow time to his daughter to recover her equanimity and complexion.

Diogenes instructed the ancients that a blush is the livery of innocence. Modern wisdom has decided it to be a symptom of guilt.

To which of the two sources are we to attribute the conscious glow now overspreading the cheeks of poor Placidia?—

CHAPTER X.

SOME three weeks afterwards, just as the hospitable country-mansions of England were overcrowding its railways with families returning to town for the re-assembling of Parliament, Miss Corbet and her homely waiting-maid stepped from the platform of the Hitchin Station into the identical carriage into which she stood accused of having, the preceding November, forced Florence Rawdon and the Pamphleteer.

On the present occasion, it was not, as on that disastrous Sunday night, a reserved *coupé* that awaited her. The compartment, where two places were vacant, was previously occupied by individuals from remote counties; who, with the scorn entertained by Great Northern travellers for the dwellers in a suburban shire, took upon themselves to decide that the quiet, simply-dressed, and pallid young woman, whose modest luggage consisted of a railway-bag bearing the initials S. C., whose frame appeared so tremulous and whose eyelids were red and swollen, was either a governess going out for the first time, or a young lady suffering from the tooth-ache, on her way to town to consult a dentist.

A heavy sigh, which now and then escaped her lips, was, however, less the evidence of pain, than of debility. The heavy interim between Lady Higham's visit to Northover and Tiny's to London, had been filled by an illness, unattended with danger; and it was only the pre-

ceding day she had obtained from Dr. Ashe the stereotyped recipe of "change of air;" which, except in the case of children young enough to play with sheepfolds and trees of green chip, might be more aptly interpreted into change of scene.

Already, her good old friend had conferred upon her the favour of securing her sick-bed from importunate visits, by a prohibition of company; and now, also at her request, he had suggested a short sojourn in town. Not for the purpose of mingling in its gay resorts. She was still unequal to the smallest exertion. But it was indispensable to her recovery to escape from Northover and Heckington, with all their withering associations.

Inconceivable had been the torment of that gentle mind, since the commencement of the year. Not from vexation at the calumny said by her friend Amy to have attached itself to her name; not from fear of the paltry malignity of a Mrs. Horsford,—

the spiteful hints of a Mrs. William Hartland,—the sudden reserve of a Lady Frere, —or the silly twitter and cackle of a large and gossiping neighbourhood. — She had patience for all this. — She had fortitude for all these.—She could even bear to think that a woman so fallen as Florence Rawdon, accused her of base and unwomanly treachery.

But what she could *not* bear were her own self-reproaches. The warning reluctantly, almost unintentionally, given by Lady Higham, had sufficed to—

> Turn her eyes into her very soul ;
> And there, she found such black and grained
> spots,

as caused her to shudder at herself. The wanderer in Eastern lands who discovers a Cobra coiled under his pillow, could not be more horror-struck !—

Till that startling explanation with Amy, never had it occurred to her mind that her affection for Arthur Rawdon was of other than a cousinly nature. As soon would she have mistrusted her filial devotion to her father, or her sisterly love for Alfred and Edgar!—

But the sudden thrill which shot through her frame on hearing it asserted that he was passionately attached to *her*, that he had loved her at the time of his marriage, and loved her still, had, by an electric shock, enlightened her mind. She could not doubt that her delight at finding the coldness of deportment from which she had so bitterly suffered, was assumed, (assumed either to screen her from the jealousy of Florence, or at the suggestion of duty and principle,) was in itself a crime.

That she should have been walking all this time so unsuspectingly on the brink of an abyss, was a terrible discovery. Like the man who died of panic on seeing, by daylight, the

broken bridge over which he had ridden securely in the dark, she fell ill from pure consternation.

To mistrust herself, to fear that she should be unable to wrestle with and cast forth the fearful serpent which had crept into her quiet cradle, had not even a momentary share in her uneasiness. But how was she to forgive herself the severity of her judgment against Florence?—

The Scripture exhortation—"let him who is without sin among you first cast a stone at her," assumed a terrible significance in her ears. Was *she* without sin?—Though, thanks to wholesome rearing, and the absence of evil precept or ill example, her character was stainless and conduct pure, was her heart without blemish,—her mind without a shadow,—her conscience without a voice of accusation?—

What moment of her life, for two years past, had not been occupied with the thought of

Arthur;—solicitude for his welfare,—care for his interests,—love for his children—for himself.

She saw it with agonising clearness; and all that remained for her, now that the scales had fallen from her eyes, was to secure herself from evil to come.

But to "walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise," is not an easy task, so long as we are submitted to the authority of the foolish. If the irregularities of private life would sometimes reconcile us to the exercise of the "paternal despotism" of the *lettre de cachet*, a case like Sophia Corbet's almost justifies the Confessional, with its instructions, prohibitions, and penances of atonement.—How sadly, poor girl, did she need a spiritual director!

It was something, however, that she was sure of a friend.

"You wrote me word, my dear child, that you were coming here for the recovery of your

health," said Lucretia Rawdon, as they sat together beside the tea-table in Hertford Street, the first evening of her arrival. "But you won't bring colour into your cheeks, by sobbing over the fire. You must rouse up your spirits, Tiny, before you've a chance of getting health into your bones."

"On the contrary, dear cousin. Perfect quiet will be my best restorative."

"So fancy most young girls, when crossed in love;—so *say* all of them.—So said I, myself, Tiny, when fretting my soul out at sixteen, at having been thrown over by your grandfather. If, instead of allowing me to mope away my next ten years because I professed to prefer 'a quiet life,' I had been whipped and spurred into the pursuits and diversions befitting my age, who knows but I might have lived to become a happy grandmother myself, instead of a cross-patch old maid."

"But I am not crossed in love, dear cousin Lucretia. *I* have not been thrown over. Write,

if you like, and ascertain from Dr. Ashe whether I am not seriously indisposed."

"No, no!—not with a good honest hospital or workhouse illness, my dear. And I've no patience with the cream-laid, electrotyped things they call 'indispositions.' When mincing-mouthed folks tell me their 'malady is on the mind,' I long to give their mind a good shake, and disencumber it. Minds were made for better purposes, Tiny, than to nourish young lady's whimsies.—Leave *them* to such Misses as the Horsfords: a Rawdon of Heckington ought to be above fid-fad!—Come, child!—Speak out!—Who's been vexing you?—What's the matter?"—

Poor Tiny was silenced. She had arrived in town, resolute and courageous. "If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out," was to be the rule of her conduct. But this heroic effort was far easier to accomplish, than to bear with the officiousness of poor Lucretia—turning up the eyelid to search for a mote, after the prying

familiar fashion of my uncle Toby and the widow Wadman.

"Only grant me a week's reprieve," said she, writhing a little under the attack, "and I promise you not to bore you with either nerves or reserves. After that respite, I will listen to you, dear cousin, and you shall listen to *me*. But in the interim, spare me all talk of either my family or myself. Let us forget Heckington and Northover. Let us forget the very name of Rawdon. Talk to me, cousin Lucretia, about things millions of miles from Hertfordshire:—Arctic Expeditions,—Atlantic Cables,—Crystal Palaces,—Great Leviathans.—Anything but home."

"Poor soul—poor dear soul!—Just what I felt and said myself, after reading William Enmore's marriage in the Whitehall Chronicle!" muttered Lucretia, as, after sealing the compact with a kiss, she stole out of the room to issue orders that the beef-tea, which she periodically inflicted on her invalid, might be

of XXX quintessence. "Well, well,—no great harm can come of letting things alone."

She did, therefore, what was wisest to be done: asked no questions—gave no advice.—But while Miss Corbet sheltered herself from the visits of even Lady Higham and Lady Frere under the sacred plea of "Not at home," provided for her, from the nearest library, heaps of popular books; and abstained from remarking, when occasionally visiting her sitting-room, whether they betrayed signs of being read; whether the pages were still uncut, or the reading mark a permanent fixture.

At length, the period of probation wore to a close, and a new week made its appearance; not more pointedly announced by the half-dozen thin account-books in roan-covers, placed on the old lady's table,—what Bob Horsford was wont to call the Monday Budget of the Provisional Government,—than by the determination perceptible "under the shadow of the even-brows" of Placidia.

"*Well*, my dear?"—said Lucretia, with an unflinching look of inquiry, as if screwing the question with a gimlet into the very heart of her companion,—"what have you to tell me?"

"Let me first inquire," replied her victim, with a slight degree of tremulousness in her voice, "whether you are prepared to prove your good will by granting me the greatest favour in the world?"

Convinced that she was about to implore a further reprieve, Lucretia's countenance grew grim and negative.

"Not I!—Out with your confession at once, Tiny!" she sharply replied. "Beating about the bush only wastes time and patience."

"In one word, then, will you pay me your summer-visit this year at Fredville, instead of Northover?—Will you accompany me, dear cousin Lucretia, to the West Indies?"

The old lady started from her chair,—

her prim bandeaux almost standing on end, but less from surprise than satisfaction. No proposal in the world could have yielded her half such delight. Fond of change and novelty, her contracted income confined her to her dull home; and so decided a proof of Tiny's confidence in her affection, went straight to her heart.

After a glance round her stuffy breakfast-room which comprehended the glass jars of entomological rarities—but whether to express her regret at having to abandon these lares and penates of Hertford Street, or her glee at the prospect of beholding them in vital and venomous vigour, were hard to say,—she crushed the feeble fingers of poor Placidia between her bony hands with fervid cordiality, as she exclaimed—"All over the world with you, Tiny!—Whenever and wherever you like!"—

This was indeed full and most satisfactory acquiescence; for poor Tiny had prepared

herself for endless questioning, and interminable remonstrances.

"Nothing I'm so fond of, my dear, as a sea-voyage," continued the elated spinster, whose closest acquaintance with the unruly element had been made in a Margate wherry. "I've wanted all my life to see Jamaica; and five-and-twenty years ago, it was a great mortification to me that Cousin Jane never vouchsafed me an invitation. But when are we to start, Tiny?—And who and what am I to take with me?"

"All and everything likely to conduce to your comfort," replied her gratified kinswoman. — "I wish to start by the mail which sails three weeks hence, if not inconvenient to you. My friend, Mr. Harman, of Bedford Square, will make all our arrangements."

"And your father, my dear?"—

"I ought, perhaps, to have told you, before I obtained your consent to accompany me, that

I have not yet asked for *his* to my departure."

Lucretia muttered a reply not altogether audible in the gallery. The old lady knew she ought not to say—"You are of age, my dear,—what does it signify?"—But at the bottom of her prejudiced heart, she felt that a scion of the Rawdons of Heckington owed only a modified amount of filial duty to Henry Corbet, the yeoman's son.

"I hope and believe you have confidence in me, cousin Lucretia," added Tiny; "and I therefore tell you frankly that my expedition to Jamaica must not be, at present, known to any one but yourself. When I am gone, my friends and relatives will learn that Dr. Ashe considers a warmer climate than Hertfordshire indispensable for my health, and that instead of proceeding to Hyères or Cannes, I prefer visiting my West Indian estates."

"But you *have* other motives, Tiny?"—

"Other very serious motives, which at some future time I will reveal to you."

"I am satisfied, my dear child. At present, I will ask you nothing more."

"On the eve of departure I shall take leave of my father and brothers,—not sooner. The interview might shake my resolution, and perhaps inspire my father with a wish to accompany us, which would wholly unsettle my plans."

"Were you a less sensible girl, or a less good one, I might think it my duty to remonstrate, and question, and bother you. I don't! —You are quite equal to manage your own matters in your own way. Or if I wanted an excuse for complying with your wishes, I might plead my obligations to the Cousin Willy who loved you so dearly, or the Aunt Jane who died because she could not have you for a daughter-in-law. But I never was one of the Goody Plausibles, Tiny. I don't love you for *their* sakes, but your own; and

am content to go with you to the world's end, and live and die with you, so you'll only love me a little in return and bear with my queerness."

Something so nearly resembling a sob burst from the bosom of poor old Lucretia, and something so nearly resembling a tear fell from her withered cheek on that of Miss Corbet, as she gratefully and affectionately embraced her, that the invalid was unspeakably touched.

If she should only succeed half as well in reconciling her father to the step she was about to take, all would be well.

Yet the arguments she had to use with *him* concerning the eligibility of her departure, were almost as cogent as those by which she had convinced *herself*. If she had promised Mrs. Corbet on her death-bed never to leave him, but preside over his household-welfare and that of her brothers, this promise had been fully kept so long as the boyhood of

Alfred claimed her personal superintendence. But the poverty and discomfort originating the anxieties of her dying stepmother, had long ceased to disorganise the family. Their establishment was now so taught and trained, that it might move on castors during her absence; and for her father to quit Northover abruptly, to the injury of his interests and before the education of the boys was complete, was a step certain to suggest to the neighbourhood that there was a rupture between the Rawdons and Corbets, and leave to their evil interpretation the assignment of a cause.

She entertained little doubt, however, of obtaining his consent, and even approval, if not asked so soon as to leave him time for recantation: the fiat of poor old Dr. Ashe being still as potent at Northover, as it had ever been at Grenfield House.

CHAPTER XI.

The captive lion in the fable was released from the toils of the hunter, by a mouse; and the best-concocted plans and stratagems are often defeated by agents equally insignificant.

One day, nearly three weeks after Miss Corbet's arrival in town, while, during the absence of the old lady for the purpose of undergoing her daily "constitutional" in the Apsley Gardens, where she trotted to and fro with the

ferocious activity of a wolf in its den, Tiny sat carefully copying at the writing-table certain household-lists, indispensable for the guidance of her father during her absence from England, the door was thrown open by Lucretia's exiguous footman; who, with as scared a look as that of his predecessor when drawing the curtains of King Priam at dead of night, abruptly announced—"LADY BROOKDALE!"

Tiny was inexpressibly disconcerted. She had hitherto managed to secure herself against all intrusion of visitors; and Lord Higham's sister was one of the last persons she wished to see.

At all times dull, methodical, and monotonous as a sheet of ruled paper, the philosophic manner in which, shortly after their first acquaintance at Higham Grange, the courtier-lady had resigned herself to the loss of the Harrow schoolboy whose death rendered Victoria Barnewall an heiress, completed the aversion of Miss Corbet; a dislike

all the greater for the family likeness borne by Lady Brookdale to her excellent and high-minded brother; reminding her of those paltry Cologne flacons which are modelled into statuettes of Napoleon the Great.

The stripling footman, however, viewed with other eyes the lady who arrived in a royal carriage, which, having brought home Lord Brookdale from some court or levée, she had feloniously appropriated for half an hour to her own use; and which, at the homely door of his mistress, created as much sensation as it would have done in some silent street in Pompeii, or as if, in place of a pair of screws, a lion and unicorn pranced in its harness. To close the door against a ladyship so conveyed, would be, he fancied, an act of Petty Treason.

But, however startled by the visit, Tiny could hardly repress a smile at the air of fastidious disgust with which Lady Brookdale, in seating herself, glanced round the shabby

room; the furniture of which, as well as of every other in the house, Lucretia had for a fortnight past been clothing in patchwork-suits of holland, baize, and muslin; to preserve its tarnished gilding and cloudy varnish from further deterioration during her absence.

"My dear Miss Corbet, you see me in a state of the utmost consternation!" began the visitor, her lacklustre eyes and stony face exhibiting at the same time the most lifeless immobility.—"I have just heard of your approaching departure for the West Indies!"—

As Lady Brookdale had expressed the same exaggerated surprise when she declined being presented at Court and pushed forward in the world, poor Tiny waited patiently to learn in what way her comings or goings could move the feelings of the lady of the Lord in Waiting. But Lady Brookdale's attention was again wandering to the tattered yellow gauze veiling the looking-glass, and the flan-

nel bags swathing the legs of the Boule writing-table as if they were afflicted with the gout. To shorten her scrutiny and the reverie to which it was giving rise, Miss Corbet proceeded to inquire whether she could execute any commission for her ladyship in the West Indies.

Lady Brookdale now fixed her eyes twice as wonderingly on the face of Miss Corbet, as she had previously done on the dismantled walls.

"*Commission?*—In the *West Indies?*—For *me?*"—said she, with a degree of emphasis betraying some indignation. "Surely (having property, I believe, in the island) you must be aware that my brother-in-law, Dr. Warwick, was consecrated, nearly two years ago, Bishop of Jamaica and the Bahamas?"

Tiny, whose correspondence with her agents was devoted to private and practical purposes, made so inarticulate a reply, that her visitor thought it necessary to add, "Being

the fourth, in precedence, of the Colonial Bishoprics."

But her expectation that Miss Corbet would instantly entreat an introductory letter of recommendation to the fourth member of the Colonial Hierarchy, was signally disappointed. —Tiny waited silently for further information.

"The fact is," resumed her ladyship, "that I am just come from my sister, Mrs. Warwick, who, having been detained in England by urgent private affairs, proceeds to Jamaica by the next mail. It was thus I became acquainted with your intended departure."

"I own I was curious to learn how so insignificant a matter could have transpired," observed Miss Corbet; "for I have endeavoured to spare some anxiety to my friends, by forbearing to announce my departure."

"Simply thus. My sister, on sending somewhat late to engage cabins in the Lightning for herself and children, was informed that

the two best had been long engaged by Messrs. Harman and Wrottesley, of Bedford Square; and immediately wrote to them, stating who she was, and requesting, of course, that the cabins might be given up to her. This they very uncivilly declined, on pretence that they were bespoken for a lady."

Perceiving that Miss Corbet made no movement of surprise, disapproval, or apology, Lord Higham's wooden effigy curtly added, "I must say that Maria has my brother to thank for having been subjected to such marked disrespect. He ought to have obtained a passage for the family of the Bishop of Jamaica in a Man-of-War, or steam-frigate. In such emergencies, the Admiralty is always courteous and serviceable."

"It may not yet be too late for such an arrangement," suggested Tiny.

"You don't know my brother. He never asks for anything,—least of all for a member of his own family. Besides, it is now unne-

cessary; for of course, on learning that *you* were the lady who had secured the best accommodation, I hastened to assure my sister, in your name, that you would be most happy to give them up to her."

"I regret that I cannot confirm the concession," said Miss Corbet, resolved to resist a proposition so almost coercive. "I was careful to secure the airiest cabin in the Lightning, because I have been suffering from severe illness; and the friend who is kind enough to undertake the care of me, must enjoy the best accommodation."

"Do you allude to the old Miss Rawdon, to whom this house belongs?" demanded Lady Brookdale, using her double eyeglass for a second and more scornful survey of the decrepid furniture.

"The greater part of our baggage is already installed," added Tiny, after an affirmative bow. "The cabins were selected for me on account of the communication between them:

—the only respect in which they differ from the rest."

"The very reason which renders it indispensable they should be assigned to my sister and her children!" persisted Lady Brookdale, evidently expecting the client of Messrs. Harman and Wrottesley to prove as subservient as she had formerly found the Bradden-Branshaws and Ommanys. "Of course you will not hesitate to oblige a person in Mrs. Warwick's influential position, whose notice of you in Jamaica may, I must be permitted to say, prove of the greatest advantage."

Miss Corbet was becoming too much amused to be angry.

"I have led a homely and home-staying life in England," she replied. "I shall live at Fredville in the same quiet obscurity; so that patronage of any kind would be thrown away upon me. I do not even take letters to the Governor, Lord Ormadale,—though brother to

one of the kindest of my Hertfordshire neighbours. I have only to regret that my convenience should interfere with that of Mrs. Warwick."

"All that remains for me, then, is to appeal to my brother's interference," said Lady Brookdale, rising perpendicularly from her chair, and preparing for departure.

But if Miss Corbet's resistance had created any illwill towards her in her ladyship's narrow mind, it must have received ample gratification in the painful change of feature and deportment, which, at that moment, seemed to convert her into stone.

Nor did Arthur Rawdon, the unexpected visitor whose sudden appearance had produced this transformation, seem to be less agitated.

The room into which he was intruding, in early boyhood his own study, had witnessed that sad interview with his cousin after poor Willy's death, the incidents of which were only too grievously imprinted in his memory.

No sooner had the door closed behind the retreating Lady Brookdale, and the carriage driven away which, standing at the door left open in honour of the Royal attendants admitted into the hall, had facilitated the entrance previously denied him,—than he hurried towards Tiny, and seized into his own her trembling hands.

"What is all this?"—cried he, in a voice she could scarcely recognise as that of her cousin. "Where are you going, Tiny?—Why are you about to desert me?"

As not a word of reply was uttered by the terrified girl, who had sunk unnerved into a chair, Arthur Rawdon continued to pour forth his incoherent remonstrances.

Throughout her illness, throughout her convalescence, he told her, he had heard from Dr. Ashe, who was also attending one of his children, such tidings of her health as in some degree relieved his anxieties; till eventually, on learning that she had established herself in

town with their cousin Lucretia, for change of air, he was tranquil.

But alas! the preceding day, an accidental encounter in the village with Susan Moore, who, as a faithful old servant of the family, he invariably honoured with a passing word, had given rise to the misgivings he now sought to enlighten. The good woman, privately engaged to accompany her former nursling to Jamaica, had, with the usual density of her class, so refined upon the discretion required of her, as to be worse than indiscreet. Her entreaties to Master Arthur "not to suppose that Miss Sophia was going away for good, to the Ingies, but only to look after her affairs a bit," afforded his first insight into the projects of his cousin.

Deny them she did not—deny them she *could* not; and she was consequently exposed to upbraidings and expostulations against which it was indeed distressing to contend.

"*You* to abandon me!" cried he.—"You, to

whom I owe my miserable destiny,—my utter desolation!—And for what? — To increase a fortune already far more than sufficient for your wants,—to grind out of those wretched blacks at Fredville, money to hoard!—You don't spend half your income, Tiny. Yet you leave me—leave your old father,—your young brothers,—your decent happy home,—only to supervise your mills and engines, lest the Harmans should wrong you of a few miserable pounds!"

Not a word—not a murmur,—escaped the lips of his cousin. Better he should put this ungracious construction on her actions, than suspect the truth. He was in fact suggesting an argument for her defence.

"It is true, I do not expend half my income," said she. "But, remember, Arthur, that I have only a life-interest in the property; and that by prudent economy alone have I been enabled to fulfil the wishes of him from whom it is derived. Within the last three years, I

have re-established the Almshouses of St. Mark's; and at Fredville and Hurtsfield, extensive Schoolhouses and Infirmaries have been built and endowed. Is it not natural I should wish to see all that has been done?"

"Schoolhouses! — Almshouses!—Infirmaries!" cried her cousin,—almost choked with indignation. "Do you weigh the benefits thus squandered upon strangers, against the deep, deep bitter misery you are about to inflict on one whose very nature is kindred with your own? I have not deserved it of you, Tiny. Wretched as you have made me, have I ever reproached you?—Devoted to you, heart and soul, have I by word, deed, or look insulted you by the betrayal of my passion?—With the utmost facility for approaching you, have I not avoided your presence, rather than expose you to evil interpretation or personal annoyance?—No, no! I have devoured my sorrow in silence, sooner than harass you by the

knowledge that there was a human being abiding so near you, whose life was worse than death."

Poor Tiny's respiration became short and troubled; and a feverish flush mounted to her cheek. But she had the courage not to interrupt him.

"When I first returned from the Continent," he continued, "I knew that jealous eyes were upon me. Florence, who—whatever else may be her faults,—is fondly attached to her husband"—

Impossible for Miss Corbet to repress a start of surprise.—Was Arthur sincere in this declaration?—Was Lady Higham deceived?—Or was he only endeavouring to startle her into candour for the certification of his own suspicions?—

"Poor Florence," he continued, "had sometimes taunted me, while we were abroad, with my attachment to 'Placidia;' and knowing that at any moment an incautious glance or word

might excite her violent temper, I carefully absented myself from Heckington. That unsatisfactory spring in London—that tedious autumn on the Moors,—had no other object or purpose. To spend the winter in Paris, I was at that time determined."

"Then why object to *my* departure from England," said Miss Corbet, faintly, "which merely carries out your own intentions?"

"The time is past, Tiny, when such precautions were necessary. When we were together in November at Higham Grange, my wife spoke frankly to me on the subject; and not only recanted her former jealous accusations, but assured me that your kindness to her children had effaced every injurious thought from her mind. She owned that, by recalling me from Jamaica, you were the cause of our marriage; and loving me as she does, how could she be otherwise than grateful?"

Poor Tiny literally trembled at these proofs of his blindness, and the triumphant dissimu-

lation of his wife That Amy should have so misconceived his views, attributing to jealousy of her sister the watchfulness arising in truth from anxiety concerning Mrs. Rawdon's jealousy of herself, was indeed unaccountable!—

Still greater surprises awaited her.

"Before the departure from England of that fellow Marsham," resumed Arthur, who was now standing on the hearth-rug, near her chair, his arm resting on the chimney-piece, and his eyes fixed searchingly upon her face, "he endeavoured, I know, to revive her jealousy, which he had probably discovered when living so much with us at Rome.—Probably, to revenge himself for your rejection of his suit."

"May not Mrs. Rawdon's brother,—who hated me for the same reason,—have endeavoured to poison her mind?"

"No! —Marsham was the enemy;—and truly thankful was I to Lord Higham for removing him from England; though, to do

Florence justice, she had begun to distrust him almost as I did myself."

"By the time I return to England," said Miss Corbet—scarcely venturing to meet his eyes while he made this assertion, "all these wretched misunderstandings will be at rest. When I am gone, there will be less chance of domestic storms at Heckington."

"By Heavens, Tiny, the atmosphere of this house is rendering you as cold, callous, and calculating as it did my mother!" cried he, with re-awakened irritation. "Can you talk of your departure thus coolly, as you would of the straying of your lap-dog?—When you are gone, to whom am I to turn for sympathy in the cares of life,—for encouragement in my occupations and aspirations,—or comfort in my distresses? Is it to the idle, thriftless, frivolous, ignorant wife you advised me to marry; or to her silly associates, and artful mother?—*Who* will train my neglected children,—who will preside over the welfare of my poor tenants?—"

"Yet when at Northover, Arthur, how little, how *very* little communication passed between us!"—

"There may be companionship without a word spoken.—Every hour of the day, your presence so near me was a blessing to me, in the good order of Heckington,—the education of the young,—the solace of the old.—Never did I return home without deviating from my path by the way, for a glimpse of Northover. That you lived there,—so near me,—safe and happy,—was enough. In winter, the light of your lamp gleaming through the crimson curtains of your studio, told me you were sitting there, employed in womanly pursuits, surrounded by reminiscences of me and mine; and, comforted by that thought, I arrived at my forlorn fireside cheered and forbearing."—He was forced to pause for a moment, to dash away the tears gathering under his swollen eyelids.

"But what shall I do henceforward, Tiny,

when poor deserted Northover greets me from a distance, and I know that all is cold and desolate under its roof?—Your father is a just man,—a good friend and a good tenant, —but no companion.—With Alfred and Edgar I have forborne, because they were your brothers. But who will mediate now in their perpetual quarrels with my keepers?—*You* have been the guardian angel of the house and its inmates.—Henceforth, all will be misery and ruin!"

"Do you assign *no* value then to the claims of duty?" faltered his agitated cousin. "Are you conscious of owing nothing to the name you bear,—the fortune you inherit,—the children who will some day represent you in this world,—the soul for which you are responsible to God?"

"Quote Watts's Hymns to me at once, Tiny, as you do to Evvy!"—cried the exasperated man. "Say to me, as you some day will to Tuddy's baby, that to be good is to be

happy. "*Happy!*" cried he, almost fiercely, "HAPPY!"—

Then bursting into a ghastly laugh, and clasping his hands upon his forehead, he began to pace the dismantled room, as if overmastered by his despair. Nor was it possible for the dismayed Sophia Corbet longer to restrain her tears.

But if they relieved her overcharged feelings, they did not unnerve her resolution. Specious as was the arguing of her cousin, and fervid his appeal, they could not remove the landmarks of right and wrong established in her conscience.

"Take pity on us, Tiny!"—gasped the distracted man, suspending his irregular steps and throwing himself at her feet "Take pity on me and my children.—Do not abandon us,—oh, do not—do not abandon us!" And throwing aside all reticence and reserve, he lifted up his voice, and wept.

It was only while endeavouring to stifle his

sobs in the heavy folds of her dress, that he suddenly perceived the cause of her seeming insensibility. She had fainted. Nature had relieved her from the anguish of that terrible struggle.

No need to summon assistance for her restoration. Lucretia Rawdon,—opportunely returning at that moment from her walk, entered the room—full of kindly and thoughtful activity. But before their mutual aid restored poor Sophia to the full use of her faculties, she insisted upon the departure of her cousin.

"Go Arthur!—" said she,—"Away with you at once.—You have done harm enough already."

CHAPTER XIII.

The first stroke of the paddle-wheels placing a chasm between the passengers in the Lightning and their native shore,—a moment usually trying to the compunctions of a sea voyager,—afforded to poor Tiny the first sensation of comfort she had experienced for many weeks past.

A severe relapse of illness had reduced her to such a state of weakness, that even Dr. Ashe, summoned to Hertford Street from

Hitchin to attend her, admitted there might be danger in her immediate removal.

But the stout-hearted Lucretia was warmly enlisted in her cause; and *her* mind was of too vigorous a nature to be alarmed by prognostics. From the moment Tiny murmured to her — "If I am too weak to walk, let me be lifted into the railway carriage and steamer;—the welfare of my future life depends on my departure," the staunch spinster resolved that a contrary fiat from the united College of Physicians should not be her hindrance.

From Henry Corbet, the project of his daughter encountered fewer obstacles than she had anticipated. He was one of those matter-of-fact individuals who, where health or fortune were in question, regarded sentiment as a feather in the scale. Dr. Ashe had decided that his daughter required a warmer climate, to a warmer climate she must go. If the Fredville agent wrote word that it was indispensable

for her interest to visit Fredville, Fredville must be visited. To part from her was a sore trial; but he was thankful for the care with which she had placed his household matters in train to spare him trouble during her absence; and promised that, between Alfred's quitting Eton and being entered at Cambridge, he should pay a long visit to his sister.

If her health did not improve, and she wished to see himself, he would at once hurry over to her in person.

But, having escorted her to Hythe on the Southampton Water, in whose offing the Lightning, with Blue Peter hoisted, lay awaiting her mails, and seen her carried from the shore-boat up the vessel's side and laid insensible in her berth, after which, standing on the little pier, he joined heartily in the cheer which greeted the departing steamer,—he returned to the Dolphin Hotel; depressed perhaps a little in demeanour, but with an excellent appetite.

This, he forthwith appeased with mulligatawny and a Hamble lobster; and returned home that night, neither a sadder nor a wiser man, though with a considerable stress on his digestion.

Yet for his poor daughter, even the hard-headed Lucretia was becoming seriously alarmed. Instead of being revived by the sea-breezes, as predicted by the good old Doctor so familiar with her constitution, she grew daily weaker and weaker. Even her powers of mind seemed failing. She scarcely recognised her cousin or Susan Moore, by both of whom she was tenderly watched over. She seldom spoke, —never unclosed her eyes. The powers of life seemed waning, one by one.

Nevertheless, deplorable as was her condition, it did not secure her from the vindictive retaliations of the Bishop's-lady. Her brother having declined to interfere in a dilemma in which he could exercise no authority, and where his personal leaning was wholly to the

side of her victim, she did not hesitate to wreak on the poor invalid the bitterness of her acrid nature.

The "children" of Mrs. Warwick, of whom Lady Brookdale had spoken so pathetically as requiring the closest umbrage of a mother's wing, were in fact two growing girls of fourteen and fifteen, much resembling the lanky wooden dolls manufactured by Swiss peasants, to be fantastically dressed by those English young ladies who work their way to Heaven through the rag-fair of Charity-bazaars.

But as if to complete their want of charm, Albertina and Alexandrina Warwick were under the care of the identical Miss Strickney, whom the release from school-room bondage of Victoria Barnewall had enabled to transfer her valuable services to another branch of the family. The model-governess retained all her powers to be disagreeable and disagreeable-making; but it would be unfair to condemn the crabbedness of her ways or judgment. To

foster the first tender shoots of spring, Providence tempers the wind, and sends sunshine in due season; but when November's nipping frosts arrive, the plants have become hardy. It is too much, therefore, to expect of governess nature to remain soft and propitious throughout life's long year, in order to cherish an endless succession of tender shoots; and, after being stultified by cramming the ears of one generation with grammar and geography, (rudiments of polite learning which it is good to possess but as harassing to impart as to acquire,) recommence the same ungrateful monotony of toil;—from Barbauld's Hymns inserted into the infant mind by pin's point, to Alison's History of England, administered under chloroform.

At forty-eight, and with a bilious constitution, Miss Strickney was not likely to be over-indulgent. In virtue of the consanguinity of her two dull pupils with a mitre, she felt, indeed, that it became her to be doubly rigo-

rous. But Lucretia Rawdon, though a friend to discipline of all kinds, denied that it was training a bishop's daughters in the way they should go, or inculcating the Christian precept to love their neighbour as themselves, to force them into warfare with their fellow creatures, by firing platoons of Mendelsohn *à quatre mains*, from one of Erard's loudest piano-fortes, at six o'clock every morning, in the public saloon adjoining Miss Corbet's cabin, just as the poor invalid was beginning to close her eyes.

Lucretia remonstrated—first by word of note—then by word of mouth;—leaving some advantage in the hands of the governess in orthography, in the first instance—the vernacular, in the last. Sore waxed the strife between the two irate spinsters; and when the Bishop's lady was appealed to, she moved for a Rule in a Higher Court; and as herself and her "young family" had been especially placed by his employers, the W. I. Mail Com-

pany, under the protection of the captain, he decided that the Mendelsohn platoons should explode as punctually and unremittingly as the morning gun.

A spirit heroic as the classic name she bore, was roused by this decree in the bosom of Lucretia. Instead of following the example of her antagonist, and rendering the cabin meals a penance to the other passengers by spiteful hints or insolent retorts, she surreptitiously borrowed a pair of pincers of the ship's carpenter; stole into the saloon at dead of night while the enemy was sound asleep; and away went the strings of the piano, wire after wire, resonant as a running fire of one of Edgar Corbet's miniature batteries!—

"Let the Captain rebuke me publicly, if he dare. Let him mulct me privately, in whatever amount of damages he thinks proper," croaked Lucretia. "I was not going to have my poor sick girl stunned out of her life by the ding-dong of those two wooden Misses."

The outrage thus defiantly committed, having afforded relief to other ears than those of poor Sophia Corbet, it elicited more mirth than indignation; and one or two among the passengers, to whom the lady of an English Bishop was not, *vu les circonstances*, altogether as much an object of reverence as in Catholic countries the mother of the Pope, took occasion privately to express their gratitude.

But the ill-feeling previously cherished by Mrs. Warwick against Sophia Corbet, was materially aggravated by the incident; nor were her feelings mollified by even the medical report current on board, that, unless some unexpected change occurred in her symptoms, the young lady of Fredville would scarcely survive to reach her possessions and be laid in the family mausoleum of the Enmores.

The very crew,—less in remembrance of the liberality with which they had been remunerated for bringing the sick young lady on board, than of the lovely face and slender

form of their inanimate burthen, walked lighter over the state-cabins and did their spiriting more gently, when they heard it predicted that their next duty towards their dying passenger would probably be to lower her body into the deep.

Meanwhile, the turmoil and clatter of the London season, where people come and go unheeded, whether from country to town, or from life to death, was renewing its usual demonstrations of forged vivacity. In Belgravia, no one notes who drops into the grave, except with reference to the property, place, or Garter he leaves behind; and even Sir Index would have found little to interleave in his favourite book, or circumstantiate in his plausible gossip, concerning the decease of Sophia Corbet.

Of the official circle in which she had moved, the members were struggling and striving after the desires of their own hearts; attempting to make a figure in life by

giving dinners which nobody cared to eat to people whom nobody cared to meet; moving mountains to accomplish the small object of being elbowed for a moment by the motley crowd of some fashionable soirée, where their presence was wholly unnoticed except by the reporter of the Morning Post.

For amidst wars and rumours of wars,—plague, pestilence, or famine,—decent deaths of venerated sovereigns or lawless assassination of law-perverting usurpers, — still whiffles on, unawed, the little frivolous twitter of the coteries, and scarcely higher-minded jargon of political life:—recording with the same tripsome levity the ruin of nations or families;—capitulations of conscience on the part of the lofty, or vulgar errors on the part of the low.

Few modern flowers of Rhetoric have been oftener quoted than Macaulay's Zealander, standing beside London Bridge to contemplate the ruins of London. But surely the

reflections attributed to the Civilised Savage, at such a moment, would be far exceeded by the wonder of the tattooed New Zealander of to-day, if introduced into the heat, glare, and crush of a Belgravian drum; and told that the incoherent sentences he hears uttered or shrieked under stress of torment, — accompanied by the giggle and simper of distressed beauty, or flushed faces and exuding brows of men asphyxiated out of the use of their faculties,—is to be accepted as a specimen of the highest order of entertainment of one of the most refined and intellectual of European nations.

Yet to the "fortuitous concourse of fashionable atoms," such scenes are Elysium. Lady Frere who, with scarcely consequence for one, had undertaken to establish her newly-married sister Mrs. Victor Ommany,—whose label of privilege in fashionable society consisted in a diamond necklace and tiara, which, if they passed for Golconda at Fair Oak, and the

county balls of its neighbourhood, twinkled only as stars of the tenth magnitude in the brilliant galaxy of May Fair.

The self-satisfied good humour of both sisters, however, arising partly from their emancipation from provincial life, and partly from total want of the sensibility which renders people fastidious and peevish, bespoke indulgence for their insignificance. People grew accustomed to the announcement of their names, the sight of their faces and sound of their voices, as to the quadrilles of Laurent's Orchestra, or the ices of Gunter; and in the orchid-house-atmosphere of ministerial Soirées, amidst a confusion of tongues capable of deafening an artilleryman or the keeper of a ménagerie, the two sisters,—the most rising nobodies of the day,—might be heard sympathising cheerfully with Lady Brookdale concerning the annoyance likely to arise to poor Mrs. Warwick, from the death of her fellow-passenger in the Lightning!—

"I have always imagined," lisped little Mrs. Ommany, intently endeavouring, as she spoke, to catch the eye of a distant duchess, from whom she craved the small charity of a frigid bow,—"I have always imagined that a funeral at sea must be one of the most melancholy spectacles in the world!—Such striking pictures of it as one has seen!—Wilkie's, for instance."

"Such an event would certainly be vastly distressing to my sister and her young family," assented Lady Brookdale. "And so rich as Miss Corbet is supposed to be, she ought certainly to have chartered a steamer for her own use, instead of molesting other people with her decease on board. The Rawdons, I conclude, succeed to her fortune?"

"Oh! dear, no!—A younger brother of her own;—nearly grown-up, and remarkably good-looking."

With the instinctive greed of a chaperoning mother, Lady Brookdale effected a syncopic

change from major to minor in the key of her voice, as she pathetically added—" I earnestly hope, however, that poor Miss Corbet is not past recovery.—Five thousand a year, if I remember?"—

" And one of the most amiable as well as pleasing persons in the world," added Lady Frere, who was as sincerely interested in the state of Tiny's health as was compatible with her meagreness of soul. " Miss Corbet is my pleasantest Clevelands neighbour, and would be a loss to me in every respect."

" What age is she, do you suppose?" inquired Lady Brookdale, carelessly.

" Quite young—certainly not above two-and-twenty," replied Mrs. Ommany, who being two years older, was disposed to suppress a a year or two.

" Four-and-twenty, I should rather conceive," rejoined Lady Brookdale, mentally dating from their first meeting at Higham Grange.

"Here is a person who is sure to be accurate!" interposed Lady Frere. "My dear Sir Justin,—pray how old is our poor friend Miss Corbet?"—

"The West Indian heiress," added Mrs. Ommany,—fancying he looked puzzled: though he was only dissatisfied at being expected to supply dates for individuals non-existent in his favourite volume.

"Miss Corbet of Northover you mean?" he replied, not a little relieved. "Upon my word I can't exactly say. But I conceive that you will find her birth recorded about the 17th page of the 1st volume of Burke's 'Landed Gentry;' under the head of 'Rawdon of Heckington.' Her mother, if your ladyship remembers, was a Rawdon."

And he proceeded as carefully to compute the dates of certain marriages and births, as though he had been an undertaker preparing the inscription for her coffin-plate.

"It don't much signify, as her days are

so nearly done," interrupted Lady Brookdale, without the slightest inflection of pity in her metallic voice. And, proceeding to the refreshment-table, she revived exhausted nature with a congenial draught of iced lemonade.

A few days afterwards, occurred an event in that self-same *clique*, which, though of less importance to what is called the world in general than even the death of Sophia Corbet, plunged a happy household into affliction. The infant son of poor Lady Higham was seized with convulsions, and, in spite or in consequence of the attendance of half the doctors in London, expired.

Already harassed by the events of the autumn, by her father's precarious condition, and her brother's reckless proceedings, the courage of poor Amy gave way. For her, the world seemed suddenly at an end.

But this feeling of utter prostration so natural on the part of a bereaved young mother, and so sincerely shared by her hus-

band, became ridiculous when simulated by the Freres and Brookdales and their *cetera*. Lady B., *née* Armstead, seemed to be of opinion that a Court Mourning ought to be gazetted for the Heir-apparent of Higham Grange; while Sir Barton appeared almost to regret that nature had never granted him a child, that his deportment after its loss might present a fac-simile of the dignified grief of his Great Original.

Wonderful, how they all crowded the door in Park Lane; first, with "obliging inquiries," eventually, with hypocritical condolences. Every body proposed to go and sit with "poor dear Lady Higham, who must be so terribly overcome and low;" just as every body offered to "pay the last respect to the dead," by attending the funeral of a babe whose life and coffin were scarce a span long!—Those who could not presume to be thus deeply afflicted, were eager in the offer of their carriages, to grace the "mournful procession!"

They were right.—" A domestic affliction" cited in the House of Lords as the motive for postponing a motion of some consequence, previously announced by the noble lord at the head of the No-matter-what Department,—a "family bereavement," dignified by a kindly message on the part of Royalty itself,—was entitled to the very utmost sympathy.

The good and beautiful Sophia Corbet was but a Sophia Corbet:—the dead infant, an Honourable James Armstead,—a prematurely blighted Peer of the Realm!—

CHAPTER XIII.

Allusion was made, in an earlier Chapter, to the sensations of relief experienced by Arthur Rawdon on escaping from cabin-durance in a mail-packet. It is easy to conceive how much greater the comfort afforded to a delicate and suffering woman, by finding herself once more on dry land, in a cheerful, spacious, and above all, tranquil habitation.

Though *his* passage had been a stormy one, and hers as quiet as if performed on the wings

of the dove on which she had so longed to "flee away and be at rest," exquisite was the delight of waking one pleasant spring-morning after a night of uneasy dreams, to find herself at Fredville,—Fredville fragrant with flowers, and bright with friendly faces.

For Tiny, in visiting Jamaica for the first time, came not to a land of strangers. Though the connection between Northover and Heckington has alone been placed before the reader, that between Northover and Fredville had been unremittingly kept up. From the moment of succeeding to the estate. till the present overclouded day, Sophia Corbet had devoted her mind not only to comprehend and promote the interests of the property, but strictly to obey the behests contained in poor Willy's farewell letter;—to "see that his poor people were mercifully dealt with; above all, that they were taught and civilised as well as clothed and fed."

To insure this, till enfranchised from the

engagement made with her stepmother, she had kept up the closest communication with the Harmans. Mary and Martha, as well as their father, were her diligent correspondents; and the Bedford Square family had been more than once her guests at Northover. It was even settled among them that, at one of those vague epochs called "some day or other," which every hopeful human being keeps as a reserve for future happiness, the prim sisters should visit the unknown country whose tongue they spoke, and habit they wore, and revive their parched natures amidst the pleasant fields and beechen-shades of the county of Herts.

They had consequently come to think and dream of the young heiress as of a providential being; and to long for a sight of the fair face of that thoughtful kindly girl, who not only despatched to them liberal gifts of new books and new dresses, but to poor old purblind Remus a Bible, whose prodigious

type was readable at ten yards' distance, and to Aunt Aggy, his wife, gown-pieces that "took the shine out of the rainbow."

Forced to admit that the Regulations for the St. Mark's Almshouses forwarded to them by Miss Corbet were far more judicious than the Code previously established, what they admired still more was the gentle phrase in which those rules were recommended, rather than enforced. How different — how very different—from all they remembered of the tyrannical Reginald Enmore and his uningratiating wife!—

Since the moment, therefore, when the English mail brought a few lines announcing that, for her health's sake, Miss Corbet was about to visit Jamaica, the two delighted spinsters had been setting her house in order, to meet the requirements of an invalid. Every corner had been swept and garnished. Recalling to mind the place as it presented itself

in their girlhood, under Mrs. Enmore's jurisdiction, they placed it in the exact condition comporting with *their* notions of the comfortable in English life.

Poor Lucretia Rawdon, who had eschewed from her youth upwards the confusion of intellect supposed to arise from over-reading, and who consequently connected the West Indies with visions of Robinson Crusoe and the Cannibal Islands, was amazed to find the female nigger-servants arrayed after the conventional fashion of Marylebone, — and that, instead of having to swing under a palm-tree in a hammock of cocoa-nut fibres, an excellent bed in a comfortable chamber awaited her:—almost disappointed when she found there were no hardships at Fredville to test her patience. Still, however, she had hopes of yellow snakes, centipedes, and vampire-bats to console her; and waited only till her dear pale Tiny should recover strength and complexion, to sally forth with the elated Mary

and Martha Harman, in quest of entomological adventures.

The season of hot winds and dust-storms had set in. But they brought compensation in the shape of those wondrous fruits and flowers, gorgeous as in an Arabian tale, to which Tiny had been introduced in childhood by the florid descriptions of her Enmore playmates. As poor Willy had formerly desired—as Arthur had more recently hoped to witness—their cousin, as soon as she was sufficiently revived to crawl about the gardens in the cool dusk, or, in the shabby sociable of former days with the self-same venerable mules, proceed to survey the beautiful scenery of the neighbourhood arrayed in its highest glories of tropical vegetation,—was no less startled than gratified; even though poor Lucretia occasionally broke in upon her reveries with exclamations of "Just like Paul and Virginia!"—or "More beautiful than the crack scene in an Adelphi Easter-piece!"

The ecstasies of the old lady were not lessened by perceiving that change of air and scene began to exercise a beneficial influence on her companion. In spite of her customary roughness of speech, Lucretia had tenderly abstained from alluding to the motives of Tiny's self-exile, into which the Creole impetuosity of Arthur had afforded her some insight; and her affection for her young cousin being doubly and trebly enhanced by the firmness of her self-government under circumstances so trying, she silently watched every change of countenance, or accession of strength, that denoted returning health.

These were becoming daily more apparent. But it was not till poor Tiny felt sufficiently strong to dispense with the support of her sustaining arm, that, escorted only at a respectful distance by poor old grizzle-headed Remus, she made her way to the mango-grove so often described to her by the Enmores; where, more than under the roof of a

Fredville, she had looked forward, throughout her voyage, to rejoining a friend. *There,* beside the old gates adorned with those emblems of mortality to her so unappalling, she recovered the use of tears so long denied her. — *There,* the self-sentenced exile wept, prayed, and was comforted.

On landing from the Lightning, the parting salutations of the Warwick family had been imbued with the sternest dignity; much resembling those of a plenipotentiary who has demanded his passports prior to a declaration of war. The Bishop's lady had made up her little mind to ignore the great heiress into utter annihilation.

As naturalists seem to fancy that their microscopes confer the faculties of existence on the animalculæ they discover and bring into notice, Mrs. Warwick evidently imagined that she possessed the power of extermination over all the blacks in the fourth colonial diocese, and a white or two, at discretion.

A very short sojourn in the island, however, demonstrated her error. She found in the contemned mite of Fredville, an independent mite. Every colony can boast its aristocracy,—as, perhaps, can every ant-hill. The Enmore family were among the earliest settlers in Jamaica. From the days when St. Jago de la Vega ceased to be a Spanish possession, they had been giving magistrates to the town, and members to its councils. If the island possessed wealthier planters, it was because the proprietors of Fredville and Hurtsfield maintained a more liberal style of living, and contributed more largely to the public weal.

Even the Harmans, parasites of the parent tree, were influential and opulent people, members of the House of Assembly, and connected by marriage with the highest officials; and Dr. Warwick, who had on divers occasions availed himself of their support, lived in

a spirit of Christian amity with every branch of a clan so respectable.

The worthy Bishop was, moreover, as became his high vocation, master of his own house. Certain masculine habiliments are said to be worn by the wives of hen-pecked husbands. Lawn sleeves should never be so degraded; and Bishop Warwick, a sensible as well as amiable man, retained the undivided autocracy of his mitre.

When, therefore, his lady apprised him of the internecine war carried on in the Lightning between his daughter's governess and the faithful duenna of Miss Corbet, he not only expressed his displeasure at Miss Strickney's hostilities, but required that a flag of truce should be carried by his worse half to Fredville. In case of contumacy, he was prepared to bear it himself.

Not so much as a rebellious word, however, awaited him. The fourth in precedence of Colonial Prelates was not the first man in

precedence in Spanish town; and that friendly Hertfordshire neighbour to whom Tiny had forborne to apply for letters of introduction to her brother, the Governor of Jamaica, had, on learning the indisposition and departure of Miss Corbet, spontaneously written to inform her brother's wife how charming an acquisition awaited her, in a lovely and accomplished girl, whose impaired health rendered desirable a temporary sojourn in the West Indies.

Long before Tiny had sufficiently recovered her strength to visit the family grave, a visit had been paid to Fredville by Lord and Lady Ormadale; and the most friendly and hospitable invitations to the Government House, urged upon her acceptance.

Mrs. Warwick was consequently ready to swallow every ugly word she had uttered, as cheerfully as if they had been candied into bonbons by Gunter to facilitate the operation;—hastening to Fredville, in the lumbering episcopal coach which was to the em-

blazoned one of His Excellency, as Sir Barton Frere to the more substantial dignity of Lord Higham. As neither the invalid nor her guardian dragon happened to be at home, she made as many obliging inquiries, and left as many cards, as she fancied would ratify at sight a treaty of peace. She was even half inclined to push on to St. Marks, and glorify, by a personal call, the agent's daughters, the "Misses Harman." But so public a condescension it might be better to keep in reserve.

By this act of amnesty, Lucretia Rawdon was a little disappointed. Like other maiden ladies who have been uniformly railed off the lists of the tournament of life, she had become viciously covetous of combat; and the success of her skirmish on ship-board, had begotten an appetite for a new campaign.

Poor Miss Strickney, on the contrary, if equally bellicose at heart, was too well broken into the subordination of oppressed governessdom, not to lay down her arms without a

murmur. At her first declaration of war, in the steamer, she was not aware that the young lady who had formerly attended to her wants at Higham Grange, was now wealthy enough to be entitled to set up an illness or affliction, on her own account. She resented only that Mrs. Warwick's admonitory snub was delivered to her in presence of the pupils in whose estimation it was her cue to be infallible; and dire was the fate of those over whom her tongue-scourging impended. Poor Albertina and Alexandrina, who had to submit that afternoon to a competitive examination of their parts of speech,—French, German, and Italian, to say nothing of the vulgar tongue,—did not inscribe with white chalk in the kalendar, their mem. of the result.

Without extending her hand too far, Miss Corbet gracefully accepted the proffered olive branch. Towards a sister of Lord Higham, she was not disposed to be unrelenting; and, conscious that what passed with others for a

visit to the West Indies, was in fact to be a residence, to last as many years as it should please the Almighty to assign her, she did not wish to embitter her inauguration by a feud with the family of her spiritual pastor,—a man so respectable and so respected as Bishop Warwick.

Though at present devoid of health or inclination for visiting of any kind, it was her object to render the life of her good old cousin as cheerful as was compatible with her own retiring habits; and she felt that, when Alfred arrived to visit her, the best society of Spanish Town ought to be available to the future heir of Fredville.

The growing intensity of the atmosphere, to others so oppressive, proved to the gentle invalid of the utmost advantage. The languid circulation of her blood became stimulated; and nature seemed to second her attempts at moral regeneration. She was endeavouring to get the better of herself; and such exertions

usually prosper. What are called "insurmountable attachments" are simply those which people make no attempt to surmount.

Poor Tiny was too wise and too good to indulge in the fantastic tricks peculiar to sentimental martyrs.

She did not entreat Lucretia to abstain from all mention of the "one loved name;" or, when she discovered at Fredville a thousand scattered memorials of the childhood of Arthur Enmore — the manhood of Arthur Rawdon,—carefully remove them from sight. But she schooled herself to listen with composure to the anecdotes of her cousin constantly related by old Remus and the Harmans; and to contemplate the sketches he had made, and the corals, shells, and madrepores he had collected, as though they had belonged to any other member of the family. If not converted into fetishes, there was no danger in allowing them to keep their place.

In the expectation of news from England,

consisted her severest trial. The eve of the mail's arriving at Fredville was now as agitating to Tiny, as it had ever been to Arthur Rawdon.

Luckily, however, her father,—at present her sole correspondent—was still too much engrossed by the precarious state of her health, to be communicative on other subjects. Of Alfred and Edgar indeed, he wrote. But it was almost in the same line and with the same degree of interest as of his prize ox, Thunderbolt, or a flock of Southdowns crossed with merino, for which he was in treaty. He even condescended to name her own poultry-yard, by a pathetic account of a fine brood of speckled Hamburghs, devoured by a weasel; and a heavy complaint of Mary the dairymaid who had made an unjustifiable demand upon him for new strainers and milk-pails, and an increase of wages. But the name of "Rawdon" or of "Heckington" did not once occur in his three pages!

Lucretia's letter of advice,—not concerning the state of her live-stock, for, during her absence, not so much as a mouse was stirring in the Tower of Famine in Hertford Street, the liveliest sample of its natural history being the pickled snakes, — consisted in a communication from the gawky footman that the water-rate had been paid, and the gas-rate called for, three visiting cards left, and half a score of circulars; but no more mention of the Rawdons, in his despatch, than if they had emigrated to Melbourne.

Tiny did not wish to hear too much of them; but this total abstinence from the subject was almost alarming.

The following mail, however, brought news even less acceptable than silence. While Lucretia's domestic intelligence was increased only by a bulletin of assessed taxes, and several small accounts, Tiny was apprised by her father that the Freres, who had been spending Easter at Clevelands, were preparing a multitude of

commissions to be executed by Alfred during his sojourn at Fredville; but that neither they nor any one else, had been received within the gates of Heckington. Illness or ill-humour, hermetically closed the door. The Rawdons apparently loved each other too much, or too little, to care for the society of other people.

Such of their country-neighbours as had not at command, like the Freres, the higher entertainments of London life, thought it hard to be thus speedily exiled from the Paradise of which they had obtained only a temporary glimpse. Far harder would they have thought the exclusion, could they have surmised what was passing under the forbidden roof!—

In many, in perhaps *most* human natures, there lurks a cowardly instinct, which disposes people to sit watching in quiet security the terrible issue of hostile encounters. The ancients revelled in the conflicts of the arena

where vigorous athlets were "butchered to make a Roman holiday," or Christian virgins flung into the maw of beasts of prey; and in the days we live in, Spain, from its queen to its water-carriers, delights in the gory spectacle of the bull-fight.

Even in print, the "clang of hostile arms" is one of the surest appeals to public sympathy. From the conflicts of Homer and Virgil, down to those of Ariosto, Tasso, Spencer,—the fight of Balfour and Claverhouse, — of Lovelace and Colonel Morden,—descriptions of mortal combat hold us breathless. Nay, the paltry sham-fight between Richard and Richmond on the boards of a theatre, or between Lords Crasher and Slasher on Wimbledon Common, cannot be suppressed without eliciting the groans of the gallery. Nay, the collision of two political thunder-clouds, such as Palmerston and Russell, though the result might shake the peace of two hemispheres, is eagerly waited for by the vulgar.

But there are other antagonisms in social life, which keener eyes are privileged to witness and bitterer hearts to enjoy:—terrible, though unavowed struggles,—silent death-storms, the blackness of which is fearfully revealed by an occasional gleam of anger, lighting up the ominous gloom;—such a domestic combat as preceded, for months, for years, the fatal catastrophe of the Duchesse of Praslin.

Even such an antagonism, arising out of one of the mismatchments created by those hypocrisies of modern life which

Make marriage-vows as false as dicers' oaths,

was converting Heckington into a place of torment.

For a year past, from the period of their sojourn in Curzon Street, complete disunion had subsisted between the Rawdons. Whether the duper or the duped had been the

first to establish the iron barrier between them, mattered little, even to themselves. Some intolerably bitter word uttered by Florence had perhaps created implacable resentment in the mind of her husband; for so deeply-seated was his aversion, that, when at Higham Grange after her illness, she made overtures of reconciliation, they were utterly disdained.

As might be expected of her mother's daughter, cunning and artifice had been the arms employed by Mrs. Rawdon in carrying on her conjugal défence; and under cover of a crowd, they might have remained triumphant. With the Highams as powerful auxiliaries, with Tiny as an unsuspecting hostage, but above all, while her stately apartments were thronged with subservient guests, Florence could outwit or defy her husband.

But since the commencement of their sinister *tête-à-tête*, she had lost all courage, all power of self-defence; and if, as we are entitled to believe, such frailties are registered in the

Great Accompt, heavy must have been the responsibility incurred by Mrs. Horsford, every time that, in the lonely watches of the night, her unhappy daughter wished herself in the grave, — every time the guilty wife cursed the hour she was born !—

Mrs. William Hartland and other triflers of her class, were defrauded of the pleasing palpitation to be derived from witnessing her struggles, as they would have viewed through 'their opera-glasses the raging madness of Lear, or the more melodious ravings of Lucia di Lammermoor; and still less were they enabled to investigate the state of mind of her husband. Not being a magistrate, he was spared one personal tax on a country gentleman's ease and comfort; and remained free as Timon of Athens to shun the society of his prying neighbours. Instead of selecting the Queen's highway for his daily exercise, or enjoying at Clevelands the fishing of the preserved stream exclusively assigned him by the

absent Sir Barton, he chose to take little Evvy upon his shoulders, and ramble about his own domain; or place the boy on the shaggy pony brought for him from the Highlands (smaller and far more docile than a Newfoundland dog), and plunge into the beautiful woods of Heckington, now exhibiting their most luxuriant foliage.

The only person whose privileges threatened poor Arthur with an unacceptable greeting, was Henry Corbet,—spud in hand, or setter at heel: whose attempts at parley with his landlord were couched in nearly the same terms as those of the ladye and the franklin's wife, in the old Scottish ballad—

"Madam, how doth my gay goss-hawk?"

And—

"Ladye, how doth my doo?"

"How's the little chap getting on in the saddle?" and "What news do you receive from Fredville?" with suitable answers, comprising their longest colloquy.

A letter addressed by the good man of Northover to his daughter, early in the month of June, was the first means of acquainting her that he had seen Arthur; and that poor Mrs. Rawdon, for some time ailing (which was probably the reason of their living so solitary a life), was gone on a visit to her parents at Torquay, for the benefit of sea-bathing.

"Our friend Ashe, who holds to the old-fashioned notion that all English children are the better for an annual dip in salt-water," added Henry Corbet, "tells me he advised the Rawdons that Evvy and the baby ought to bear her company. But either their father wouldn't spare them, or Mrs. Rawdon was of opinion that so large a party might be too much for the poor old Squire, whose life, for a year past, has been hanging on a thread. For she took herself off yesterday, accompanied only by her French maid, and Robert, who is to be sent back when she is settled. And now that he is relieved from the company of a nervous

invalid, Arthur may perhaps become himself again, and a trifle more sociable."

By this intelligence, the anxieties of Placidia were set at rest. Though far from surmising the extent of the aversion existent between that ill-assorted couple, a careful retrospect of Lady Higham's revelations as well as of her cousin's manifestation of remorseful confidence in his wife, often caused her to shiver, even amidst the torrid atmosphere surrounding her.

At any moment, some unforeseen incident might bring to light what was already known to more than one person, and suspected by many; and who could foretell the degree of exasperation of an injured husband and father, of so fiery a temperament, that even to those he loved, his resentments were alarming!

Significant hints, which it had not always been possible for Tiny to silence, when Susan Moore was in attendance on her sick bed,

concerning the "thousand pities it was them dear children at Heckington should have a fly-by-sky for a mother," and still stronger expressions occasionally fulminated by the censorious lips of old Lucretia, convinced her that the flighty conduct of Mrs. Rawdon had afforded matter for general discussion.—A single whisper reaching the ear of Arthur might, at any moment, overthrow the fabric of falsehood she had built on such shallow foundations!—

It was a comfort, therefore, to know they were apart, and that Florence was safe with her parents; protected alike from the pursuit of her lover, and the just retribution of her husband. Tiny breathed more freely at the idea that the Heckington she loved was, for the present, secure from conversion into a scene of disgrace. She was able almost to enjoy the high-bred courtesies of the Ormadales; and endure the starched and blued ostentation of Mrs. Warwick and Miss Strickney; whose rigid circle at the Episcopal

Palace exhibited a not very remote resemblance to the Torture Room of the Holy Inquisition.

The invalid was now becoming acclimatised; Tiny was herself again. Lucretia had fortunately allied herself hand and glove with the "Misses Harman,"—able to chat with her concerning the cousin Jane who, daughterless, and worse than husbandless, had occupied her lonely leisure at Fredville in inducting the agent's little girls into the mysteries of fancy-work.

Hailing with almost youthful glee every novelty that greeted her in what poor Willy used to call the land of green ginger and yellow fever, she was never weary of accompanying the maiden sisters to the Infant Schools of St. Marks; where the ludicrous woolly-pated "piccaninies" reminded her of the black-leather dolls of European toy-shops, or dangling signs of the marine store-shops,—those pitfalls and quicksands of the London area-ocracy. She could hardly persuade herself, that nigger-life,

—Abolition or no Abolition,—was not a joke; more especially as regarded first and second childhood,—its Topsys and Remuses; and Mary and Martha had a hard matter to prevent the old lady from marring their scholastic discipline and creating rebellion against their Almshouse Regulations, by prodigal gratuities, such as would have fattened for a week her lean footman in May Fair.

It was at present settled that in the month of September, as soon as his harvests were garnered, and Alfred disenthralled from the "antique towers" always pleasantest to look at from afar, and whose "Henry's holy shade" is always most devoutly adored, retrospectively, —Henry Corbet and his son should hasten to Fredville. The latter, indeed,—in spite of the counter attraction of fox-hunting, and a still unfaded scarlet coat,—was to spend the winter with his sister. But Northover had claims upon her father, against which she had nothing to urge; and already, Tiny was begin-

ning to form plans for excursions to the Blue Mountains, and visits to the chief points of interest in the island, which were to be crowded into the six weeks to which her father limited his stay.

More turtle, more iguana, more fruits with rugged rinds and luscious cores, were to grace her board during that hasty visit, than were ever before heaped on the luxurious table of Fredville; and Mr. Harman already rejoiced in the prospect of having to exhibit his mills, plantations, and farms, to the discerning eye of a practical man, capable of a deeper interest in his improvements, than poor Willy Enmore or his haughty brother.

Mary and Martha had resolved upon the careful clear-starching of their choicest muslins, in honour of a widower described by Lucretia as a personable man of fifty; and Mrs. Warwick half regretted that the strict scholastic rule of her deputy-dragon, Miss Strickney, would stand in the way of a pre-

liminary flirtation between the young heir of Fredville and her well-regulated automata.

But alas! all these preparations and anticipations might have been spared. Early in September, Lucretia Rawdon, with a face as nearly blanched with horror as the copper-colouring Carribean sun would permit, rushed into the chamber of poor Tiny one morning with an open letter-bag in one hand, and file of newspapers in the other; the obituary of the latest of which recorded the death of—

"On the 10th of August, at Palk Crescent, Torquay, aged 73, Everard Hartley Horsford, Esq. of Clevelands, Herts; and at the same place, two days afterwards, in the 27th year of her age, Florence Emily, second daughter of the above, and wife of Arthur Rawdon, Esq., of Heckington Hall!"—

CHAPTER XIV.

But yesterday, as far removed as space could part them; and now, as near as if united by the very air she breathed!—On waking from the first sleep into which she had wept herself after reading that fearful announcement, it seemed to poor Tiny, as if her youth's companion, — her womanhood's hateful enemy,—were hovering over her head.

Who has not experienced the strange sensation, that the death of those dearest to us

seems to remove them at once to a dark, mysterious, unfathomable distance; — while that of a mere acquaintance, appears, on the contrary, to bring them life-like, to our presence.

Not a word reached Fredville on the subject which occupied all its thoughts, beyond that formal paragraph. The event having occurred but a day previous to the despatch of the Mails, no letter, however brief, arrived to soften or explain. The simultaneous deaths of father and daughter naturally led to a supposition that they might be the result of some infectious disorder or epidemic.

But alas! one of those terrible presentiments spontaneous in the human mind, which stir the very pulses of our being as by a death-knell, assured poor Tiny that some dreadful mystery was connected with this double death.

Patiently, however, had she to await the development of her apprehensions. Till the

arrival of the following mail, the thronging suggestions of her anxious heart, no less than Lucretia's wild and groundless surmises, must bide their time.

That the decease of a Rawdon of Heckington necessitated a family mourning at Fredville, sufficed to secure her from the inundation of worldly gossip which must have rendered still more puzzling her guesses at truth, was some alleviation. Mrs. Warwick, indeed, entitled by the intermarriage of her brother with the Horsford family to especial sympathy in the event, despatched to Fredville a groom wearing so lugubrious a sacerdotal livery as almost to impersonate a sexton; bearing a letter of condolence, drawn up with such serried precision by Miss Strickney, that its hard angles seemed almost to bruise the intellect of the reader. Whereas Lord and Lady Ormadale contented themselves with riding over to say that "as dear Miss Corbet probably no longer wished to see them to dine and sleep, on the

1st of October, as previously settled, if a change of air and scene could be agreeable to her, there was at all times a quiet suite of rooms and an affectionate welcome awaiting her at the 'Government House.'"

When at length the mail so eagerly anticipated was signalled in the harbour, it brought, only a single letter for Tiny, and that from her father. Her vague hope that Amy would write—that Arthur would write,—was disappointed.

"I am truly sorry, my dear child," wrote the simple-minded farmer of Northover, "that you should have been exposed to the sudden shock of learning Florence Rawdon's decease from the newspapers; but it could not be helped. I am still more sorry to tell you that you must be content with having Alfred only, as your guest, this winter. It is not *possible* for me to bear him company. Judge for yourself.

"Three days after the news of Mrs. Rawdon's sudden death reached Heckington, I

was sent for by Arthur,—who was not at Torquay when she died, and did not so much as attend the funeral. (Such a strange, wayward race, those Enmores !)

"When I entered his study, however, I saw that it was not indifference to his loss, or want of feeling, which had kept him away from the house of death ; for never in my born days, my dear girl, did I behold a man so altered ! He looked ten years older ;—his eyes sunk in his head,—his features drawn together as if by untimely wrinkles.—He did not even pretend to listen while I offered him the condolences usually made on such occasions ; but after a minute, made a struggle to inform me that he was going abroad for a year or two,—to Italy,—to the East ;—and that the Highams, who had kindly undertaken the charge of his children during his absence, had already fetched them away, to Park Lane, to live with and be as their own.—

"'This house will, of course, be shut up

while I am absent from England, Corbet,' said he. 'And what I have to ask of you, as of a near relative and valued friend, is, that you will undertake the care of the property, on the same terms as for the Court of Chancery, with absolute authority over the whole.—If you kindly consent, you will find a Power of Attorney lying for you at Meriton's, our family solicitor, in Lincoln's Inn;—who is now drawing out my will,—by which, with your permission, I shall constitute you joint guardian, with Lord Higham, of my children.'

"I did not think twice about any answer, Tiny; for who could have had the heart to say nay to a poor fellow, suffering as Arthur evidently was at that moment? I objected only, that being now, thanks to my daughter, at ease in my circumstances, payment for any services I was able to render him was quite unnecessary.

"Matters were soon settled between us. And, you must perceive, my dear child, that

as Arthur has already departed for the Continent, it is impossible for *me* to abandon my post.

"Alfred will be with you early in November: overjoyed at the prospect of his voyage, his visit, and above all at his emancipation from Greek and Latin."

That Alfred would probably bring circumstantial particulars of recent family events, reconciled Miss Corbet to the barrenness of her father's communication. By its arguments, however, she was instantaneously convinced. Deep as was her disappointment at his non-appearance, she was of opinion, an opinion strenuously confirmed by Lucretia, that it was his duty, under the circumstances, to remain in England.

All she could do in the interim, was to apply herself unremittingly to the improvement and embellishment of her little domain. Weary of hearing the decay and ruin of several of the finest Plantations in the county attributed to the influence of Abolition, she set about in

right earnest the task of rendering more remunerative the extensive farms attached to both Fredville and Hurtsfield. If Sir Joseph Banks endowed Jamaica with the bread-fruit-tree, and Lord Rodney with the mango, Sophia Corbet enriched it with many of the valuable novelties recommended by that wondrous Society which, by much prodigality of chemical compounds and gold medals, enables the agriculturists and horticulturists of modern times to gather grapes from thorns, and figs from thistles. If, with due deference to the hobby of Northover, she pressed a little over-eagerly on the bigoted Harman the cultivation of Italian rye-grass for the poor beasts which had hitherto fattened contentedly on sugar-cane, or "trash," filial piety must be her excuse.—

When, at the close of the rainy season, in December, Alfred and the Pacific mail made their appearance together, Miss Corbet was at first too much struck by the growth and im-

provement of the handsome stripling, to indulge in much questioning. When she *had* leisure and composure to be curious, she found in her brother's replies, a trifle more of Eton, than of Northover.

" Yes ! Arthur Rawdon had started no end of an expedition ;—in a yacht he believed,—couldn't exactly say where,—to Shanghae,—or Timbúctoo—*or somewhere.* No chance of his returning for years to come,—if ever."

Lucretia's inquiries were answered with the same frank vagueness. A stranger to the old lady, who had prudently avoided Northover during vacation-time, his good looks and cheery manners made an immediate conquest of the eccentric spinster. He wanted indeed only a broken leg or sprained knee, to make him as great a favourite as Edgar.

The frank lifting of his cordial eyes
obtained indulgence for every shortcoming.

" I can't say, to a hair, what Mrs. Rawdon died of,—poor woman !"—said he, when more

closely questioned. "Probably the shock of seeing her old father fall dead before her, from a stroke of apoplexy. But I know that her sister and Lord Higham got down to Torquay before she expired, in time to receive her last instructions. There was a great talk raised in our neighbourhood,—chiefly by those foolish Hartlands,—about the shamefulness of Arthur's not being with his wife at her death; or at all events, bringing her home to be buried, or attending the funeral."

"And did he *not?*"

"By her own express desire, she was buried with her father, at Torquay. As soon as Arthur left England, and the Freres came down from town at the end of the session, proposals were sent round for a memorial-window in Heckington church to the memory of Mrs. Rawdon.—Dying so young and being so beautiful, people were, of course, very sorry for her."

A sigh, somewhat resembling a grunt, ex-

pressed considerable dissent on the part of the plain-dealing spinster.

"Mrs. Hartland, who was at the head of the subscription, put down her name for five pounds; and Lady Frere, as became a Privy Councillor's wife and the proprietress of Cleveland, overtrumped her, by subscribing *ten*. When they applied to my father, in a long flummering letter, he declined, till he had communicated on the subject with Lord Higham."

"Who returned for answer?"—

"That he had acted very judiciously—that the proceeding was quite unauthorised by the family. And so, we heard no more of the memorial window; for by the same post came a letter from Lord Higham to Sir Barton, requesting that the scheme might be abandoned. Clevelands, of course, withdrew its name, and Shrublands followed the example; and like all failures, where the money has been returned at the doors, the less said about it, I believe, the better. So at

least thinks my father,—to whom the honour and credit of Heckington are as dear as his own."

"But the children?—Dear Evvy,—my own pretty little Sophy?" inquired his sister,—who was as busy with her needlework in a shady corner of the room, as the disturbance of her feelings would allow.

"Both getting on famously," replied Alfred, though almost tired of answering questions. "My father insisted, before I sailed, on my seeing Lord and Lady Higham and the whole nursery; though I'd have much rather not,—they were still in such deep mourning."

"You *saw* them, however?"

"Didn't I!—Poor Lady Higham as thin and pale as a ghost, and tears in her eyes at every word: — Tuddy's baby, — though as able to walk as I am,—always in her arms; though more, I suspect, for the memory of her little dead-and-gone son, than of her sister."

"Did she send me no message, Alfred?" inquired Miss Corbet, in a very faint voice.

"She was beginning to do so,—she got as far as—'Tell my dearest Tiny,'—but there her sobs stopped her; and she hurried with little Sophy out of the room."

A few moments afterwards, his sister made an equally precipitate retreat. And then commenced a more rigorous cross-examination on the part of the sturdy Lucretia. Alfred, however, was not the boy to surrender his news-budget without a struggle.

"To own the truth," said he, "I acquired as little useful knowledge during my short stay in town, as (except in the playing fields), at Eton. A grand political shindy was going on, and a loud talk of the ministry going out;—a great dust, or rather a great fog,—and everything in confusion."

"Dear me!—Bless my soul!"—exclaimed Lucretia, who cared very little about the matter, except as affecting the Highams.—

"And what was your father's opinion about it all?"

"That it signifies little at any time who is in or out, unless to the parties themselves. Such changes, he thinks as advantageous to the country as successive crops to land: the measures of the Liberals being usually carried by the Illiberals,—and Tory measures by the Whigs,—just as in our Eton rowing-matches we look one way and pull the other;—which makes the beaten track of politics as broad as it is long."

"Better it were shorter and narrower!" croaked Lucretia. "But since the ministry was shaking in its shoes, I'm afraid there's little to be expected in the way of rational communications from Park Lane."

The courteous reader is now requested to suppose that a year and a day have "dragged their slow length along;"—to *suppose* it,—because the period of suspense is as wearisome to describe as to endure,—even though enlivened,

as in the case of good old Lucretia Rawdon,—by the hunting of centipedes or bagging of humming-birds; or occupied, as in that of Sophia Corbet, by dwelling sadly on the past, and courageously on passing events.

If Tiny entertained, for the future, certain vague and far-remote hopes, let us trust that they regarded the eventual settlement in life of Tuddy's baby.

A letter received from her brother after he quitted the West Indies, during her own summer sojourn at Hurtsfield and his at Northover previous to instalment at Cambridge, though it contained no news of home, the almost daily record of whose doings—(its sayings were few!)—were regularly transmitted to her by her father, afforded a few interesting particulars which he had gathered at the hospitable board of Lord Higham, in his transit through town.

"Evvy is grown a noble boy,—as sturdy a little beggar as was ever beheld; and the

little girl,—baby no longer,—can pronounce the name of 'Tuddy,' so as to be perfectly intelligible to Aunt Amy and Nurse Milsum. Perhaps after my first term at Cambridge, I may become a sufficient proficient in the dead languages, to interpret its lingo.

"They seem to hear very little of Arthur. 'Somebody,' (whose name was as much lost upon me as if articulated by Tuddy's baby,) to whom he had given in the Mediterranean a cast in his yacht, the Osprey, brought home to the children some beautiful Indian toys, which seem to announce that he has been a great wanderer. But the same N. N. also stated that Arthur Rawdon was in all respects so altered, as to be scarcely recognisable. Where he had been, or whither he was going, was a problem to the anonymous deponent."—

This intelligence, vague as it was, enabled Miss Corbet to hear without much surprise or agitation, soon after her return to Fredville for the winter, that a schooner yacht of 200 tons,

called the Osprey, was anchored at Port Royal. And when, shortly afterwards, a spare, bronzed stranger, with hair only a little less grey than the grizzly poll of Remus, looked in upon her one morning from the verandah, she neither screamed nor fainted; but with almost decent composure, advanced to welcome her cousin Arthur.

Changed as he was, she could of course no longer see in him one of those terrible Enmores pointed out to her avoidance by her kind stepmother; and treated him accordingly with the love due to a cousin, and the sympathy due to his sadness. Tiny was herself a little altered; graver, older, though not a particle less lovely than of old.

Together, they wandered about the scenery so interesting to both; together, devised plans for future improvements. Lucretia, indeed, who had long decided that *something* was wanting to complete the resemblance between "Paul and Virginia" and Fredville, was not

altogether satisfied with the dry and rational nature of their pursuits; and even Susan Moore was of opinion, when their strollings among the palm-groves and bamboos had been prolonged from weeks to months, that it was *almost* time Master Atty and Miss Sophy came to an understanding.

The hesitation of Arthur Rawdon to offer himself to the acceptance of his cousin, probably arose from a painful consciousness of the humiliating antecedents he had brought upon himself. But whatever might be the nature of their mutual retrospections or anticipations, to the credit of both be it recorded, that not a word ever escaped the lips of Tiny injurious to the memory of the dead. Nor did Arthur, in his most unguarded moments, betray to the woman he loved, that the death of his wife resulted from the birth of a child it was impossible for him to acknowledge; or that, though her worthless mother would fain have concealed the fact,—even in the face

of Death,—Judgment,—Eternity,—all had been confessed to him by his poor, misguided Florence, in a letter dictated by heartfelt penitence; remitted to him at the instigation of Lord Higham, by the clergyman who had administered to her death-bed.

The stone was rolled to the mouth of her sepulchre!—To Arthur, the secrets of her untimely grave were inviolable.

He did not even acquaint Miss Corbet that retributive justice had overtaken Mrs. Horsford and her unprincipled son. Living together in London lodgings, in reduced circumstances, their only solace consisted in preying upon each other—like the cock and the serpent, enclosed by the laws of the ancients, in the sack with the parricide.

When spring-time came, and the logwood was again in bloom and the wild plantains once more verdant, even Arthur Rawdon seemed to think he had loitered long enough, infructuously, at Fredville.

One evening, in the fragrant twilight, his tremulous hand, somehow or other, found itself grasping the slender fingers of his cousin.

"The master of the Osprey has been with me to-day, Tiny," said he, "and I have ordered her to be placed in sailing order.—I find I must hasten back again to England.—Your father writes me word that everything at Heckington is at sixes and sevens, for want of the presence of a master.—He complains, too, that you are sadly wanted at Northover."—

Tiny made no reply. But the hand enclosed in that of her cousin trembled still more unconcealably than his own.

"I want you to give me a great deal of advice previous to my departure," he continued, in a faltering voice. "It is highly necessary I should learn how to manage those poor dear children. I must have them back from the Highams.—I feel that I can live no longer without my darling Evvy!"

"You don't mean, I hope, to exclude

Tuddy's baby from your affections?" rejoined Miss Corbet, endeavouring to speak cheerfully, though in a voice somewhat less assured than became her pseudonym of Placidia. "And why not call them '*our*' children?—Why not say at once, my own Tiny, come back with me,—come home to HECKINGTON?"

THE END.

J. Billing, Printer, 103, Hatton Garden, London, and Guildford, Surrey.

NEW WORK EDITED BY SIR B. BURKE.

Now Ready, in 1 Vol., royal 8vo., with upwards of 500 coloured Illustrations, £2 2s., handsomely bound with gilt edges,

THE BOOK OF ORDERS

OF KNIGHTHOOD, AND DECORATIONS OF HONOUR OF ALL NATIONS.

Comprising an Historical Account of each Order, Military, Naval, and Civil, with Lists of the Knights and Companions of each British Order, &c. Embellished with upwards of

FIVE HUNDRED FAC-SIMILE COLOURED ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE INSIGNIA OF THE VARIOUS ORDERS.

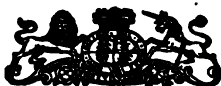
EDITED BY SIR BERNARD BURKE,

ULSTER KING OF ARMS.

"This valuable and attractive work may claim the merit of being the best of its kind. It is so comprehensive in its character, and so elegant in its style that it far outstrips all competitors. A full historical account of the orders of every country is given, with lists of the Knights and Companions of each British Order. Among the most attractive features of the work are the illustrations. They are numerous and beautiful, highly coloured, and giving an exact representation of the different decorations. The origin of each Order, the rules and regulations, and the duties incumbent on its members, are all given at full length. The fact of the work being under the supervision of Sir Bernard Burke, and endorsed by his authority, gives it another recommendation to the public favour."—*Sun.*

"This is a work the want of which has long been felt in this country, as it thoroughly supplies a hiatus in the literature of titles, that had greatly inconvenienced many persons. As the author justly observes, the value of an authority on such a subject, in which the reader can ascertain who has been decorated, and what is the character of the decoration, must be obvious. To supply that authority, he has compiled the work under notice, and illustrated it with figures of the several badges of distinction in a manner which leaves nothing on this head to be wished for. Commencing with Anhalt, the work proceeds alphabetically, taking Austria with its ten orders, and its host of decorative medals and crosses, Baden, Bavaria, Belgium, Brazil, Brunswick, Denmark, France, Great Britain and Ireland, Hanover, Hesse, Holland, Lucca, Luxembourg, the States of the Church, Parma, Portugal, Persia, Prussia, Russia, Sardinia, Saxony, the Saxe-Coburgs, the Two Sicilies, Sweden, Tunis, Turkey, Tuscany, and other smaller independent countries and governments. It would be superfluous to enter at large into the subject-matter of this volume, inasmuch as it must inevitably be in the hands of every person desirous of knowing the facts which it contains. It will, therefore, suffice generally to say, that a more interesting, a more useful, a more valuable, and a more magnificent work of its class, has not been recently published in this or in any other country; and that it is impossible for any well-constituted library to remain without it."—*Observer.*

HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS, SUCCESSORS TO HENRY COLBURN, 13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.



Under the Especial Patronage of

HER MAJESTY & H.R.H. THE PRINCE CONSORT.

NOW READY, IN ONE VOLUME, ROYAL 8VO.,

WITH THE ARMS BEAUTIFULLY ENGRAVED,

Handsomely Bound, with Gilt Edges,

LODGE'S PEERAGE

AND

BARONETAGE,

For 1858.

ARRANGED AND PRINTED FROM

THE PERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS OF THE NOBILITY,

AND CORRECTED THROUGHOUT TO THE PRESENT TIME.

LODGE'S PEERAGE AND BARONETAGE is acknowledged to be the most complete, as well as the most elegant, work of the kind that has ever appeared. As an established and authentic authority on all questions respecting the family histories, honours, and connexions of the titled aristocracy, no work has ever stood so high. It is published under the especial patronage of Her Majesty, and His Royal Highness the Prince Consort, and is annually corrected throughout, from the personal communications of the Nobility. It is the only work of its class in which, *the type being kept constantly standing*, every correction is made in its proper place to the date of publication, an advantage which gives it supremacy over al its competitors. Independently of its full and authentic information respecting the existing Peers and Baronets of the realm, the most sedulous attention is given in its pages to the collateral branches of the various noble families, and the names of many thousand individuals are introduced, which do not appear in other records of the titled classes. Nothing can exceed the facility of its arrangements, or the beauty of its typography and binding, and for its authority, correctness and embellishments, the work is justly entitled to the high place it occupies on the tables of Her Majesty and the Nobility

---

[FOR THE CONTENTS OF THIS WORK SEE NEXT PAGE.]

LODGE'S PEERAGE AND BARONETAGE.

LIST OF THE PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

Historical View of the Peerage.
Parliamentary Roll of the House of Lords.
English, Scotch, and Irish Peers, in their orders of Precedence.
Alphabetical List of Peers of Great Britain and the United Kingdom, holding superior rank in the Scotch or Irish Peerage.
Alphabetical List of Scotch and Irish Peers, holding superior titles in the Peerage of Great Britain and the United Kingdom.
A Collective List of Peers, in their order of Precedence.
Table of Precedency among Men.
Table of Precedency among Women.
The Queen and Royal Family.
The House of Saxe Coburg-Gotha.
Peers of the Blood Royal.
The Peerage, alphabetically arranged.
Families of such Extinct Peers as have left Widows or Issue.
Alphabetical List of the Surnames of all the Peers.
Account of the Archbishops and Bishops of England, Ireland, and the Colonies.
The Baronetage, alphabetically arranged.
Alphabetical List of Surnames assumed by members of Noble Families.
Alphabetical List of the Second Titles of Peers, usually borne by their Eldest Sons.
Alphabetical Index to the Daughters of Dukes, Marquises, and Earls, who, having married Commoners, retain the title of Lady before their own Christian and their Husbands' Surnames.
Alphabetical Index to the Daughters of Viscounts and Barons, who, having married Commoners, are styled Honourable Mrs; and, in case of the husband being a Baronet or Knight, Honourable Lady.
Mottoes alphabetically arranged and translated.

"A work which corrects all errors of former works. It is the production of a herald, we had almost said, by birth, but certainly, by profession and studies, Mr. Lodge, the Norroy King of Arms. It is a most useful publication."—*Times.*

"Lodge's Peerage must supersede all other works of the kind, for two reasons; first, it is on a better plan; and, secondly, it is better executed. We can safely pronounce it to be the readiest, the most useful, and exactest of modern works on the subject."—*Spectator.*

"This work derives great value from the high authority of Mr. Lodge. The plan is excellent."—*Literary Gazette.*

"This work should form a portion of every gentleman's library. At all times, the information which it contains, derived from official sources exclusively at the command of the author, is of importance to most classes of the community; to the antiquary it must be invaluable, for implicit reliance may be placed on its contents."—*Globe.*

"The production of Edmund Lodge, Esq., Norroy King of Arms, whose splendid Biography of Illustrious Personages stands an unrivalled specimen of historical literature, and magnificent illustration. Of Mr. Lodge's talent for the task he has undertaken, we need only appeal to his former productions. It contains the exact state of the Peerage as it now exists, with all the Collateral Branches, their Children, with all the Marriages of the different individuals connected with each family."—*John Bull.*

HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,
SUCCESSORS TO HENRY COLBURN,
13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET, LONDON.
TO BE HAD OF ALL BOOKSELLERS THROUGHOUT THE KINGDOM.

13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

MESSRS. HURST AND BLACKETT,

SUCCESSORS TO MR. COLBURN, HAVE IN THE PRESS THE FOLLOWING NEW WORKS.

HENRY III., KING OF FRANCE: HIS COURT AND TIMES. From numerous Unpublished Sources, including MS. Documents in the Bibliothèque Impériale, and the Archives of France and Italy. By Miss Freer, Author of "The Life of Marguerite D'Angoulême," "Elizabeth de Valois," &c. Embellished with Portraits.

MEMOIRS OF RACHEL. Two Volumes, Post 8vo., with Portraits. 21s. bound. (*Immediately.*)

THE OXONIAN IN THELEMARKEN; or NOTES OF TRAVELS in SOUTH-WESTERN NORWAY, in the Summers of 1856-7; with Glances at the Legendary Lore of that District. By the Rev. Frederick Metcalfe, M.A. Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford; Author of "The Oxonian in Norway," &c. 2 vols. post 8vo. With Illustrations, 21s. bound.

NOVELS AND NOVELISTS, FROM ELIZABETH TO VICTORIA. By J. C. Jeaffreson, Esq. 2 vols., post 8vo. With Illustrations, 21s. bound.

THE LIGHT OF OTHER DAYS. By John Edmund Reade. 3 Vols.

EVERY MAN HIS OWN TRUMPETER. By G. W. Thornbury, Esq. 3 Vols.

RUMOUR. By the Author of "Charles Auchester," &c. 3 Vols.

And NEW NOVELS By MISS PARDOE, MISS JEWSBURY, MR. HANNAY, and the Author of "Margaret Maitland."

THE NEW NOVELS NOW READY.

ONE AND TWENTY. By the Author of "Wildflower," "The House of Elmore," &c. 3 Vols.

A LOVER'S QUARREL. By the Author of "Cousin Geoffrey," &c. 3 Vols.

THE TWO BROTHERS. By the Author of "The Discipline of Life," &c. 3 Vols.

ADELE. By Julia Kavanagh. 3 Vols.

THE MORALS OF MAY FAIR. Second Edition. 3 Vols.

